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THE NEW YORKER

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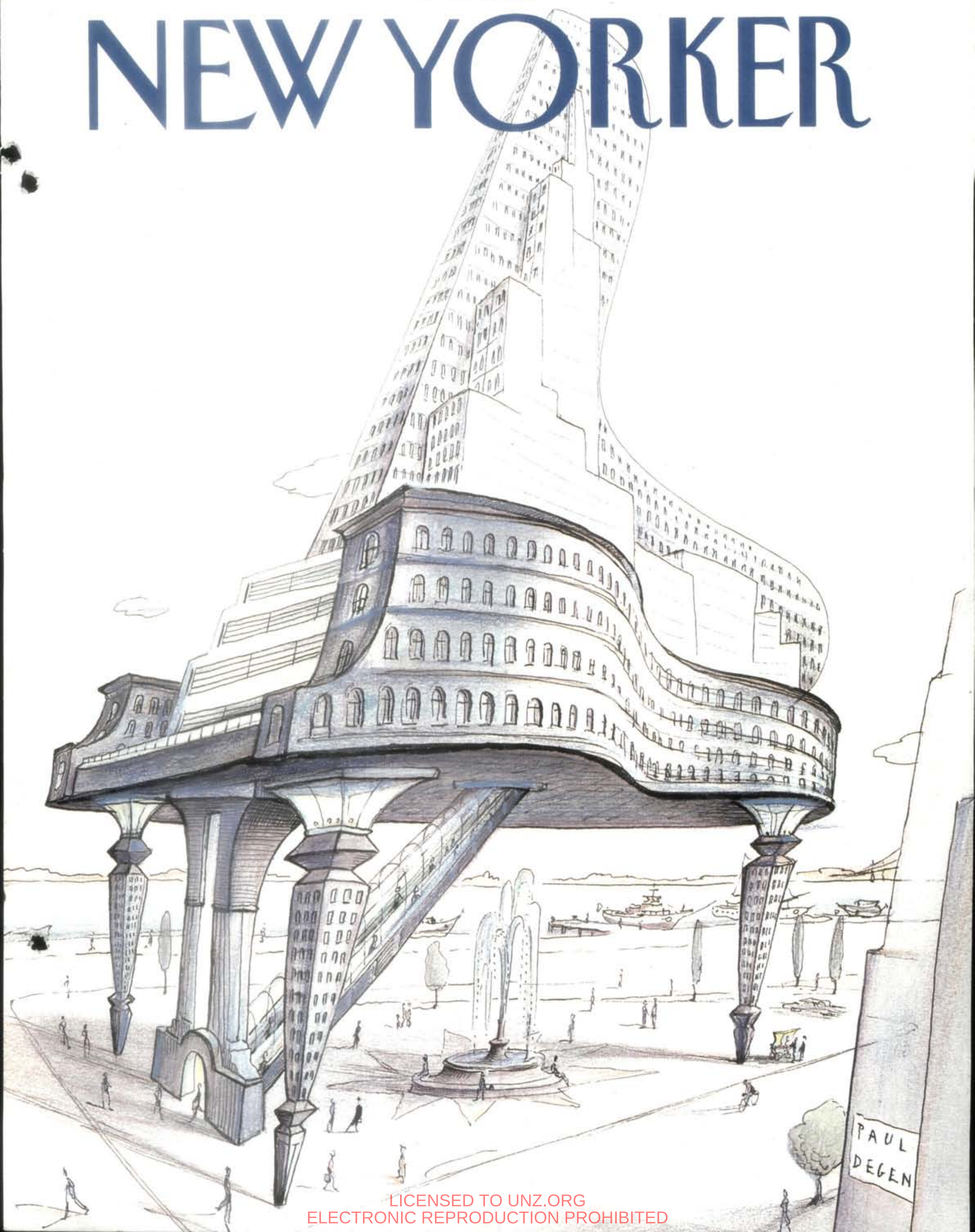

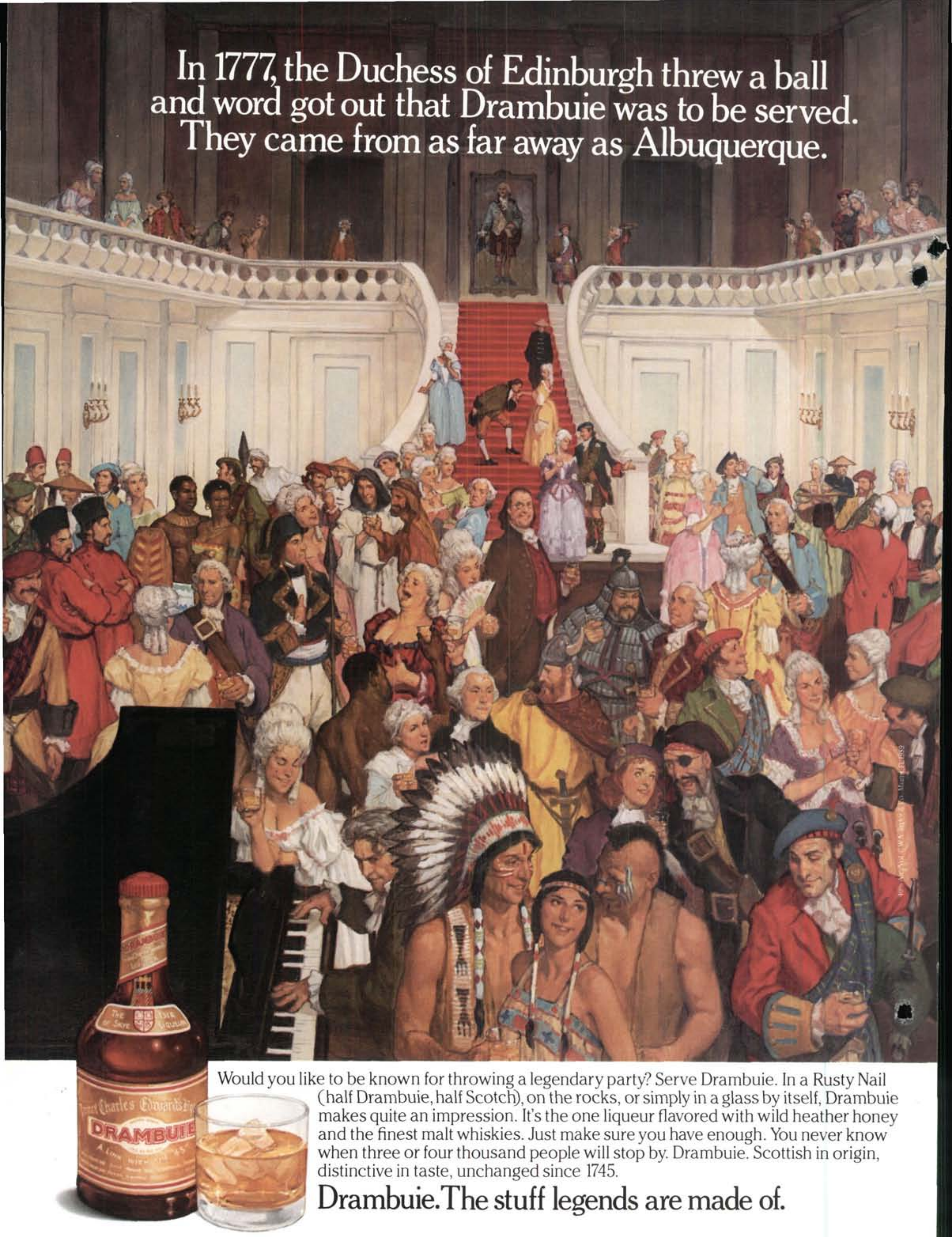
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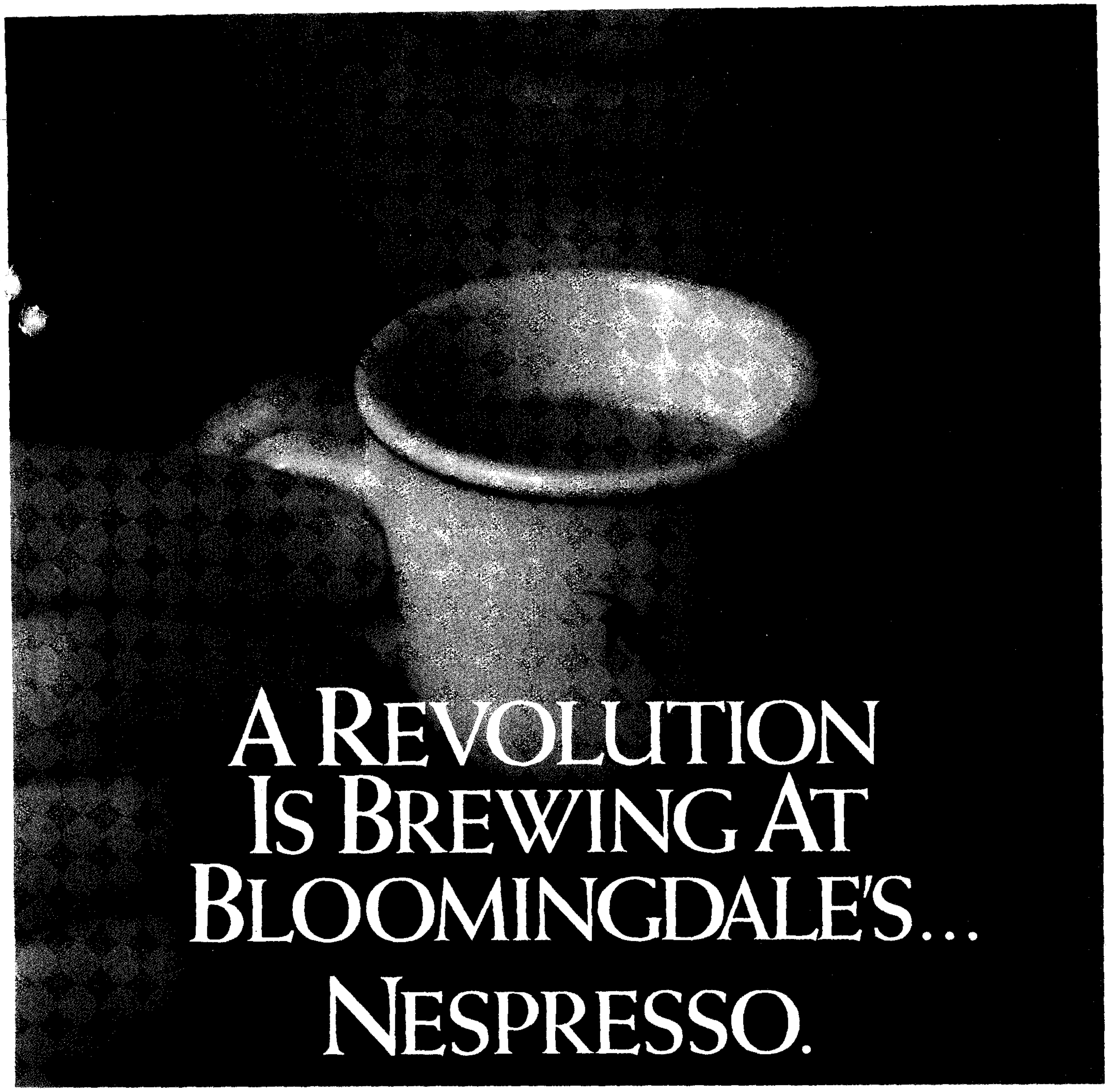

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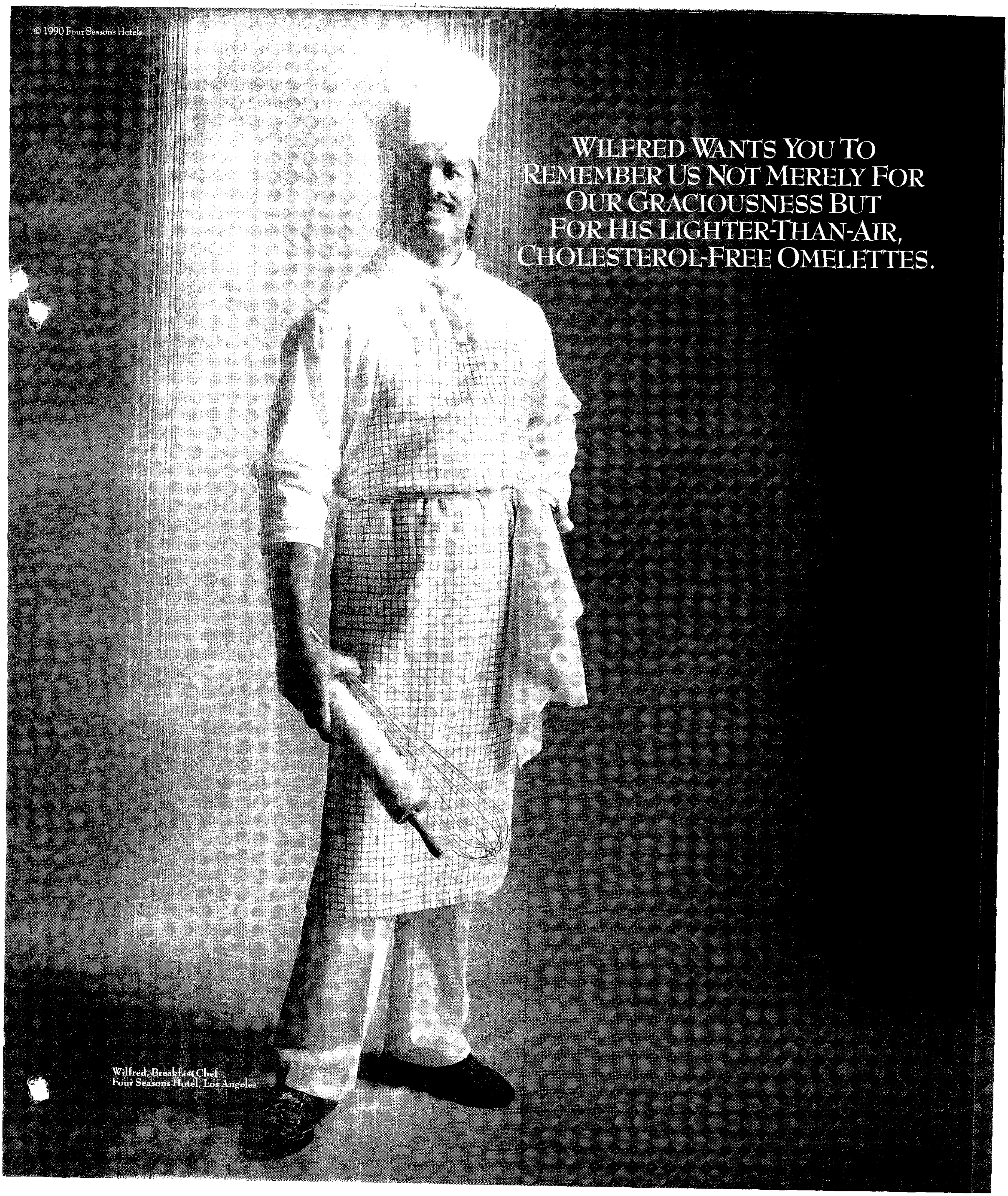

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

A LETTER came the other day from Miller Wright, at Shirley Herz Associates, saying that through November 25 the Classicworks company would be presenting Sir John Vanbrugh's restoration comedy "The Relapse" at the Westbeth Theatre Center (151 Bank Street).

Productions of restoration comedy are sufficiently rare in these parts that we rang Mr. Wright to find out who Classicworks are and whatever possessed them. Anthony Naylor, it turns out, who directed the current production, was formerly with the Royal Shakespeare Company. As for Russ Billingsly, Anne Lilly, and Sandra Laub (who are in the cast), they are all former students of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, who later met up in New York and decided to form a company devoted to mounting productions of classic plays so that people could see them done properly. (Mr. Wright may have used slightly different words, but that was his general drift.) "The Relapse," featuring a cast of twenty, represents their first really big show—with, as Mr. Wright put it, "period costumes and the whole works." Certainly, it's a felicitous choice.

"The Relapse" was Vanbrugh's first play and his answer to the most popular domestic melodrama of the day, Colley Cibber's "Love's Last Shift," which ushered in a whole new genre of eighteenth-century theatre. A "sentimental comedy," as such plays were to be called, "Love's Last Shift" told the story of one Loveless, who, having deserted his devoted wife eight years earlier, came back and took her as his mistress because he failed to recognize her, and, on discovering her identity, became a truly good man. In "The Relapse," Vanbrugh—who seems to have found the idea of Loveless's moral conversion unconvincing—picks up the story where Cibber left off, resuscitating Loveless and Amanda and offering a picture of what their subsequent marriage was really like. It's generally agreed that "The Relapse" is the better play. No less interesting than the fate of Cibber's characters, however, were the respective fates of the two playwrights. Cibber, who himself played Lord Foppington in "The Relapse" (it was to become his most popular role), went on to become the leading actor and the most commercially successful playwright of his day, poet laureate, and the literary manager and director of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. He also got the last laugh on Vanbrugh, who died leaving an incomplete play that Cibber finished for him.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

Carnal Knowledge—Jules Feiffer's play, which was made into the 1971 movie. The cast includes Justine Bateman and Judd Nelson. Directed by Martin Charnin. In previews. (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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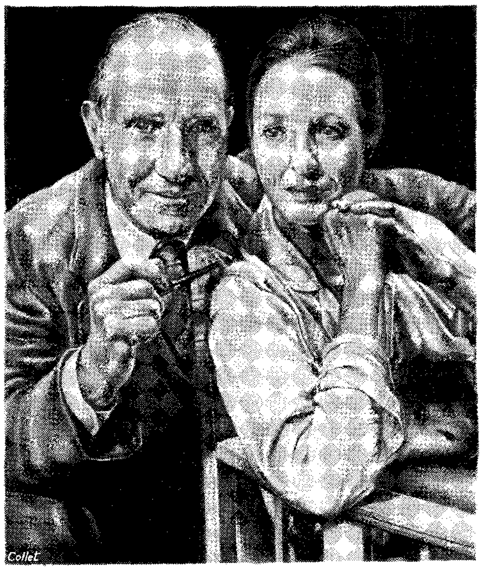
Catch Me If I Fall—A musical by Barbara Schottenfeld. Previews through Nov. 11. Opens Nov. 12 at 6:30. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Daytrips—A play by Jo Carson. Preview on Nov. 6. Opens Nov. 7 at 8. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Fiddler on the Roof—Topol heads the cast in a revival of the 1964 musical by Joseph Stein (book), Jerry Bock (score), and Sheldon Harnick (lyrics). Direction and choreography are based on Jerome Robbins' original. In previews. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 586-6510.)



Nigel Hawthorne and Jane Alexander in "Shadowlands"

Grotesque Love Songs—A play by Don Nigro, with Felicity Huffman, Sally Kirkland, and Chad Lowe. Directed by Kenneth Elliott. Previews through Nov. 11. Opens Nov. 13 at 8. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

I Ought to Be in Pictures—A revival of Neil Simon's 1980 play, presented by the American Jewish Theatre. Previews through Nov. 10. Opens Nov. 11 at 7. (Susan Bloch, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

I Stand Before You Naked—A new play by Joyce Carol Oates. In previews. (American Place Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

King Lear—Hal Holbrook has the title role in this production of Shakespeare's tragedy, which was directed by Gerald Freedman. In previews. (Roundabout, 100 E. 17th St. 420-1883.)

Lake No Bottom—A new play by Michael Weller, with Daniel Davis, Robert Knepper, and Marsha Mason. Carole Rothman directed. In previews. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103.)

Monster in a Box—Spalding Gray's latest autobiographical monologue. Previews through Nov. 13. Opens Nov. 14 at 7. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Shadowlands—William Nicholson's play about C. S. Lewis and Joy Davidman. With Nigel Hawthorne, who was in the original London production, and Jane Alexander. Staged by Elijah Moshinsky. Previews through Nov. 10. Opens Nov. 11 at 6:30. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-4099.)

Shogun: The Musical—Based on the novel by James Clavell. June Angela, Philip Casnoff, and Francis Ruivivar lead the cast. John Driver wrote the book and the lyrics and Paul Chihara the score. In previews. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 246-0102.)

Subfertile—A play by Tom Mardirosian, with Richard Council, Kitty Crooks, Susan Knight, Mr. Mardirosian, and Frederica Meister. Preview on Nov. 6. Opens Nov. 7 at 8. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Those Were the Days—A Yiddish-English musical revue put together by Zalmen Mlotek and Moishe Rosenfeld. Preview on Nov. 6. Opens Nov. 7 at 7. (Edison, 240 W. 47th St. 302-2302.)

The Wash—A play by Philip Kan Gotanda, with Nobu McCarthy, Sab Shimono, and George Takei. Opens Nov. 6 at 7:30. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

RECENTLY OPENED

About Time and **Handy Dandy**—James Whitmore and Audra Lindley in two plays in repertory. The first is by Tom Cole and the second is by William Gibson. ("About Time" was reviewed in our issue of 10/22/90, and "Handy Dandy" in 11/5/90.) (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.)

Abundance—Tess Harper and Amanda Plummer in a play by Beth Henley. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Closes Nov. 25.)

Aspects of Love—Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest extravaganza, based on David Garnett's frail 1955 novel of the same title, aspires to good taste and sophistication (it's about artists and theatre folk rather than cats or trains) but ends up being a monument to vulgarity. The combination of Garnett's triviality and Lloyd Webber's pretentiousness produces something so empty it implodes. (4/23/90) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story—Paul Hipp is the legendary singer in this musical imported from the West End. Directed by Rob Bettinson, the show was written by Alan Janes. The songs are Holly's. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Camille, A Tearjerker—Everett Quinton and the late Charles Ludlam are both at their best in this revival of Mr. Ludlam's 1973 spoof, which gives Mr. Quinton a chance to "play the whore" on a grand scale. (Charles Ludlam Theatre, 1 Sheridan Square. 691-2271.)

Circle Repertory Company—The first production of the season is **THE COLORADO CATECHISM**, a two-character play by Vincent J. Cardinal. With Becky Ann Baker and Kevin James O'Connor. (99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100. Closes Nov. 11.)

Falsettoland—This latest installment of a three-part cantata by William Finn (music and lyrics) is a sequel to "In Trousers" and "March of the Falsettos." Mr. Finn's story presents a number of new elements (among them a bar mitzvah in the hospital room of a man who is dying of AIDS) before dissolving in its own syrup. The music sounds agreeable enough, and the performance goes smoothly, under the direction of James Lapine. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782.)

Forever Plaid—Stuart Ross's loving, tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. The performances of Jason Graae, Stan Chandler, David Engel, and Guy Stroman (as the Plaids, a close-harmony group snuffed out in the prime of life and brought back to earth for a single evening) are so deadpan, and the songs (arranged by James Raitt) are rendered at such a heightened pitch of musical good faith, that only from Ross's script and choreography would you know the thing is a parody. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.)

Happy Days—Charlotte Rae and Bill Moor in a revival of Beckett's play. Carey Perloff was the director. (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes Nov. 11.)

Jackie Mason: Brand New—The comedian brings his act to Broadway again. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 246-0102.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—Presenting two plays in rotating repertory: Shaw's **MISALLIANCE** and Cocteau's **INFERNAL MACHINE**. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

The Lady from Havana—A play by Luis Santeiro. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 695-6134. Closes Nov. 25.)

BRANCUSI

NOVEMBER 3 - DECEMBER 15

MADISON AVENUE NEW YORK

THE THEATRE—Cont'd

Lettice & Lovage—The marvellous Maggie Smith plays Lettice Douffet, a freewheeling guide to England's stately homes, and the elegant Margaret Tyzack plays a reprimanding envoy sent by Lettice's employers in Peter Shaffer's merry comedy about an unlikely friendship and other matters. Paxton Whitehead and Bette Henritze are effective in supporting roles. Michael Blakemore was the director. (4/9/90) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Lucky Come Hawaii—A play by Jon Shirota opens the season for the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 245-2660. Closes Dec. 1.)

Machinal—A noisy, blinding revival of Sophie Treadwell's dreary 1928 expressionist play, which was based on the Ruth Snyder murder case. (10/29/90) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Closes Nov. 25.)

The Miser—This tiresome, simpleminded, infantile revival of the Molière classic is an almost total washout saved from ignominy only by a dashing comic turn by John Christopher Jones. The director, Stephen Porter, would seem to have found for the divine Philip Bosco a part he can do nothing with. (10/29/90) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Oh, Kay!—David Merrick's new production of the Gershwins' 1926 musical comedy. Angela Teek and Brian Mitchell lead the large cast. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.)

Once on This Island—A musical by Lynn Ahrens (book and lyrics) and Stephen Flaherty (score), which is based on Rosa Guy's 1985 novel, "My Love, My Love." Seen last spring at Playwrights Horizons, the show has now moved to Broadway. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Piano Lesson—August Wilson's newest drama, the fourth in his series chronicling the black-American experience in the twentieth century, is set in Pittsburgh in 1936. In its exquisite writing and over-all structure (involving the conflict over a piano that figures hauntingly and intricately in one family's history) the play resembles "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" more than "Fences." Wilson takes refuge in an overly mystical and melodramatic ending, but there are some great scenes—even if the subtle ensemble acting in Lloyd Richards' production is thrown out of balance by an excessive performance by Charles S. Dutton. (4/30/90) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 582-4022.)

The Playboy of the Western World—John Millington Synge's play, presented by the Irish Repertory Theatre. With Patrick Fitzgerald, Ciaran O'Reilly, Madeleine Potter, and Stephen Joyce. (South Street Theatre, 424 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

***Prelude to a Kiss**—Craig Lucas's entertaining romantic comedy slips into fantasy when an old man kisses a bride at her wedding. Barnard Hughes is the old man, Ashley Crow is the bride, and John Dossett is the groom. (3/26/90) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 944-9450.)

The Relapse—A production of Sir John Vanbrugh's play, presented by the Classicworks company. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0390. Closes Nov. 25.)

The Rothschilds—A revival of the 1970 musical by Jerry Bock (score), Sheldon Harnick (lyrics), and Sherman Yellen (book). (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

Six Degrees of Separation—You're best off knowing nothing about the new John Guare play, other than that it represents a perfect meeting of the playwright, director Jerry Zaks, and actress Stockard Channing. Out of a true story—one apparently about celebrity and Good Samaritanism—Guare has fashioned a wistful comedy about race, class, money, imagination, collective conscience, individual psyche, and the impulse toward art. What more do you want? (6/25/90) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Smoke on the Mountain—This loving satire of old-time gospel music, set in 1938, is perfectly delightful. Written by Connie Ray (who also performs, along with six other versatile actor-musicians), it re-creates a Saturday-night service at a small church in rural North Carolina, where a family of more or less devout gospel singers have been invited to appear. (Lambs Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

Spinoza—A play by the Dutch dramatist Dimitri Frenkel. (Jewish Repertory Theatre, 344 E. 14th St. 505-2667.)

The Sum of Us—David Stevens' poignant comedy about how hard it is for parents and children to break free of each other (particularly if they get on too well) is set in present-day Australia. Depending on how you look at it, the play is either very dear and rather flawed or rather dear and very flawed; but cast and direction are both excellent, and Tony Goldwyn is electrifying as a young homosexual who wishes his father weren't quite so laid back about his homosexuality. (11/5/90) (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020.)

Twelfth Night—Shakespeare's comedy, presented by the Riverside Shakespeare Company. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 369-2273. Closes Nov. 24.)

LONG RUNS

BLACK AND BLUE: An evening of classic blues and jazz, conceived, designed, and directed by Claudio Segovia and Héctor Orezzoli, who created "Tango Argentino" in a similarly commemorative but far less visually opulent style. Musicians of renown have been assembled, and while La Vern Baker, Linda Hopkins, and Carrie Smith sing, a troupe of hoofers young and old give the tap-dance subculture a workout. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 246-0102.) . . . **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.) . . . **CITY OF ANGELS:** Larry Gelbart, dramatist; Cy Coleman, composer; Billy Byers, arranger; James Naughton and Gregg Edelman, leading men; and Michael Blakemore, director, are all in top form in this sharp, jokey musical satire about Hollywood in the forties. The plot concerns the making of a private-eye movie (and the unmaking of its author). The spectacular setting and costumes were designed by Robin Wagner and Florence Klotz and lighted by Paul Gallo. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 246-0102.) . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run celebrated its thirtieth birthday last May. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.) . . . **A FEW GOOD MEN:** "Mister Roberts" meets "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." Aaron Sorkin's military-courtroom drama treats issues such as justice, honor, loyalty, and morality with the slick, facile smugness of a half-hour comedy series. Directed by Don Scardino. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.) . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1990:** A source of continual merriment, this revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it, and wrote the witty, barbed lyrics. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.) . . . **GRAND HOTEL:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show, but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 246-0102.) . . . **GYPSY:** This revival of the great Sondheim-Styne-Laurents-Robbins musical (directed by Arthur Laurents himself) is so delightful—and the cast so engaging—that we think anyone would be happier for having seen it. One suggestion: don't applaud when Mama Rose comes down the aisle (you'll drown out the first number). With Linda Lavin. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 246-0102.) . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.) . . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.) . . . **OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY:** Jerry Sterner's comedy about a New York corporate raider's attempt to take over a decorous New England business maintains its suspense from beginning to end. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.) . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

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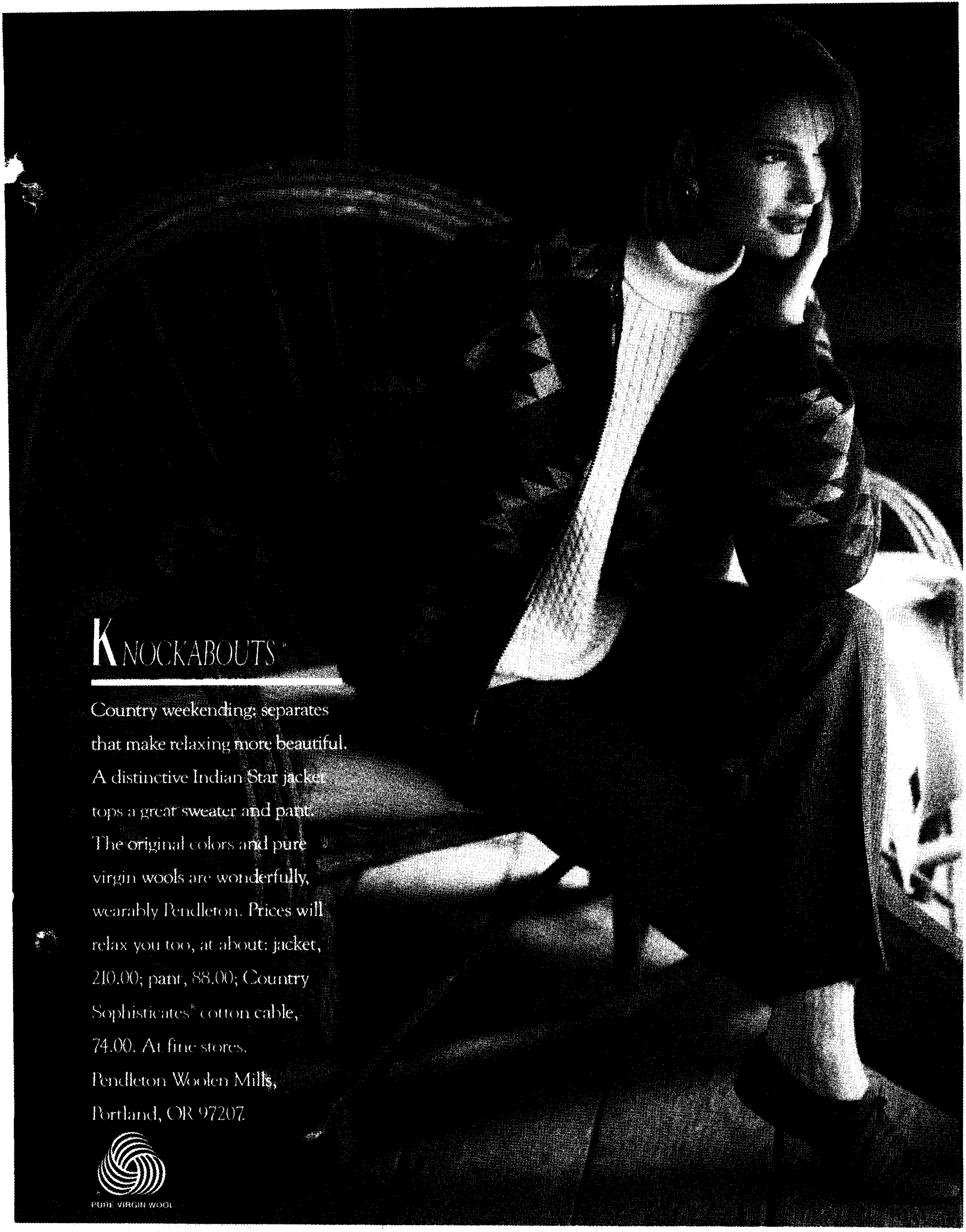

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PURE VIRGIN WOOL

DANCE

DURING the year 1933, George Balanchine is recorded to have choreographed seven ballets. Six of them were for one company, Les Ballets 1933, and they constituted the group's entire repertory. The company survived for only a single season—the collaborators didn't get along. But, owing to rapturous eyewitness accounts of performances, to photographs of the young dancers in evocative designs by Christian Bérard and André Derain, and to Balanchine's later recensions of four of the works, the ballets have become legendary in retrospect, symbolic of the dream-haunted thirties, whose innocence has come to be equated with evanescence, and whose glamour seems to cast an increasingly ambiguous shadow. The relationship of this legend to the reality will be one of the points addressed in "Les Ballets 1933 and Beyond," an afternoon-long program at the Bruno Walter Auditorium, in the New York Public Library at Lincoln Center, on November 9. The event is co-sponsored by the Dance Critics Association and the Dance Collection of the library. Lecturers will include Arlene Croce, Claudia Roth Pierpont, and Jane Pritchard. Roman Jasinsky, who performed principal roles with the company, will be interviewed by the critic Joan Acocella.

On November 10, also in Bruno Walter, there will be an afternoon-long program called "Bronislava Nijinska: Choreographer, Dancer, Teacher." The agenda includes a lecture by Lynn Garafola and several panel discussions with such participants as Irina Nijinska (Bronislava's daughter), Frederic Franklin, and Maria and Marjorie Tallchief. The centerpiece of the program will be a performance of a solo from Bronislava Nijinska's 1928 production of "Le Baiser de la Fée," originally choreographed for the Ida Rubinstein Ballet company. The dancer, thirteen-year-old Jennie Somogyi, a student at the School of American Ballet, worked with Nina Youshkevitch—a longtime dancer for Nijinska and now a teacher in New York—and with Irina Nijinska, who provided the choreographic notations of the solo on which this reconstruction is based.

Both seminars have been organized in conjunction with small shows that are scheduled to be installed at the library. The show on Les Ballets 1933, comprising materials from the Dance Collection and from private collections in New York, will be at the Amsterdam Gallery from November 8 to January 19. The show on Nijinska, featuring some twenty pages of notation by the choreographer that have never been exhibited in New York, will be installed in the Vincent Astor Gallery from December 7 through April 6.

JOYCE THEATRE—Nov. 6-11: Grupo Corpo Brazilian Dance Theatre. . . . ¶ Nov. 13-25: Garth Fagan Dance. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. For information about programs and schedules, call 242-0800.)

NIGHT LIFE

THE Russian Tea Room, the home of beluga, blini, samovars, and waiters who look as if they've just stepped out of "The Brothers K.," is now also the home of a cabaret. Those with short memories might need to be reminded that the Tea Room had a cabaret once before: the Casino Russe, which flourished in the nineteen-thirties and forties. But whereas the old place was housed in a building next door (it passed to new owners in 1945, and the building was eventually torn down), the new cabaret is located above the restaurant itself, so that now you pass through the bustling dining room, ascend a flight of stairs, and find youself in an intimate, windowless room decorated in the same Christmas-with-the-czar colors as the floor below. The room was previously used only for private parties, and Faith Stewart-Gordon, who runs the Tea Room (and who has long ascribed to the Tom Carvel school of do-it-yourself radio advertisements), told us that she got the idea of transforming it after a party thrown by Dorothy Loudon last summer. "She had a piano put in there, and she sang, and everybody had a wonderful time. And I thought, This would be a great room for a cabaret." The only renovations necessary were a piano, a sound system, some stage lights, and a few more tables.

Ms. Stewart-Gordon launched her new enterprise with a ten-week Sunday-night series (through December 16) that includes such stalwarts as Andrea Marcovicci and Julie Wilson, and she has tentative plans for a fuller schedule beginning in February. As for the forty-five-year hiatus, it seems much shorter. "There's an old tradition here of association with the theatre and music worlds," she said. "Since I've started this, people have said to me, 'I thought you always had cabaret.' "

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Singer-actress **ANDREA MARCOVICCI,** who's currently performing here, has a quivering, sexy voice, uses all her theatrical skills to sell a song, and seems to hover around three main themes: how to find a man, how to hang on to him, and what to do when he leaves. At her show here last year, she sang everything from Berlin and Kern to the theme from "Tootsie," and quoted everyone from Dorothy Parker to Nietzsche to Peter Ustinov. Shows in the Oak Room Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine-fifteen, and Fridays and Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen. Dining.

BALLROOM, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—It's everything a cabaret should be: sleek, elegant, intimate, and slighty decadent. It also offers something that other cabarets do not: tapas, which are prepared at the Spanish restaurant adjoining the club. **KAREN AKERS,** one of the brighter lights of the cabaret scene, who has lately been spending more time on Broadway (she was in "Grand Hotel") than in the clubs, settles in for a few weeks beginning Nov. 6.

BIRDLAND, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—Many musicians who visit this jazz house are honored—if that's the word—by having their portraits done, "in concert," by the house artist. These impressionistic renderings round out a glossy décor that includes flying-saucer light fixtures, burgundy velvet drapes, and some neon wading birds. Nov. 9-14 the club will be the site of a Candid Records celebration, during which patrons can witness the making of some live records. The **DONALD HARRISON** quintet, featuring the young New Orleans trumpeter Marlin Jordan, will perform Nov. 9-10; an all-star outfit featuring Gary Bartz, Kenny Barron, and others holds forth Nov. 11-12; and the **CLAUDIO RODITI** quintet performs Nov. 13-14. Music from nine Sundays through Thursdays and from nine-thirty Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

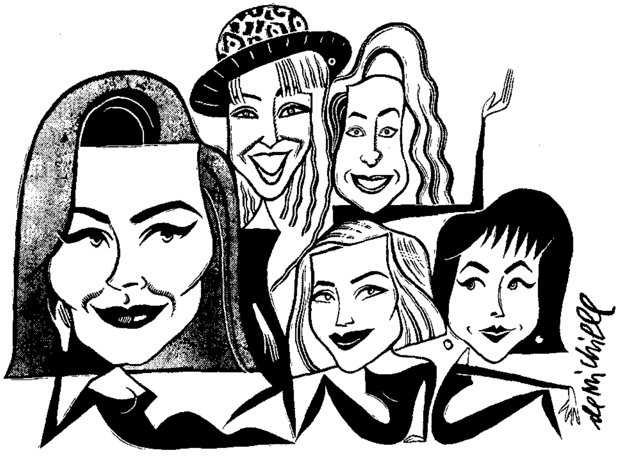
BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—This blue-on-blue club is the place to find big-league jazz artists. It's an institution and it knows it: how many other clubs sell their own belt buckles? Not long ago, the superb jazz and scat singer **CARMEN MC RAE** released a record of Monk tunes with lyrics set to them. It's a fine, surprisingly effortless album, particularly when one considers how tricky and angular the pianist's music is. Ms. McRae will be in session here Nov. 6-11. Music from nine. Dining.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—A great barn of a rock club. Country songwriting heavyweights **GUY CLARK** and **TOWNES VAN ZANDT** will be here Nov. 7. **ROBERT EARL KEEN, JR.,** will also be performing. Nov. 8-11 belongs to the quirky folkster **CHRISTINE LAVIN** and to singer-songwriters **BUSKIN & BATTEAU.** Of the fact that the latter pair have occasionally written jingles to support themselves, Robin Batteau has said, "It's a little weird, after you've been singing love songs for a number of years, to sing an homage to soup." Shows Sundays through Thursdays at eight and eleven, and Fridays and Saturdays at eight-thirty and eleven-thirty. Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster.

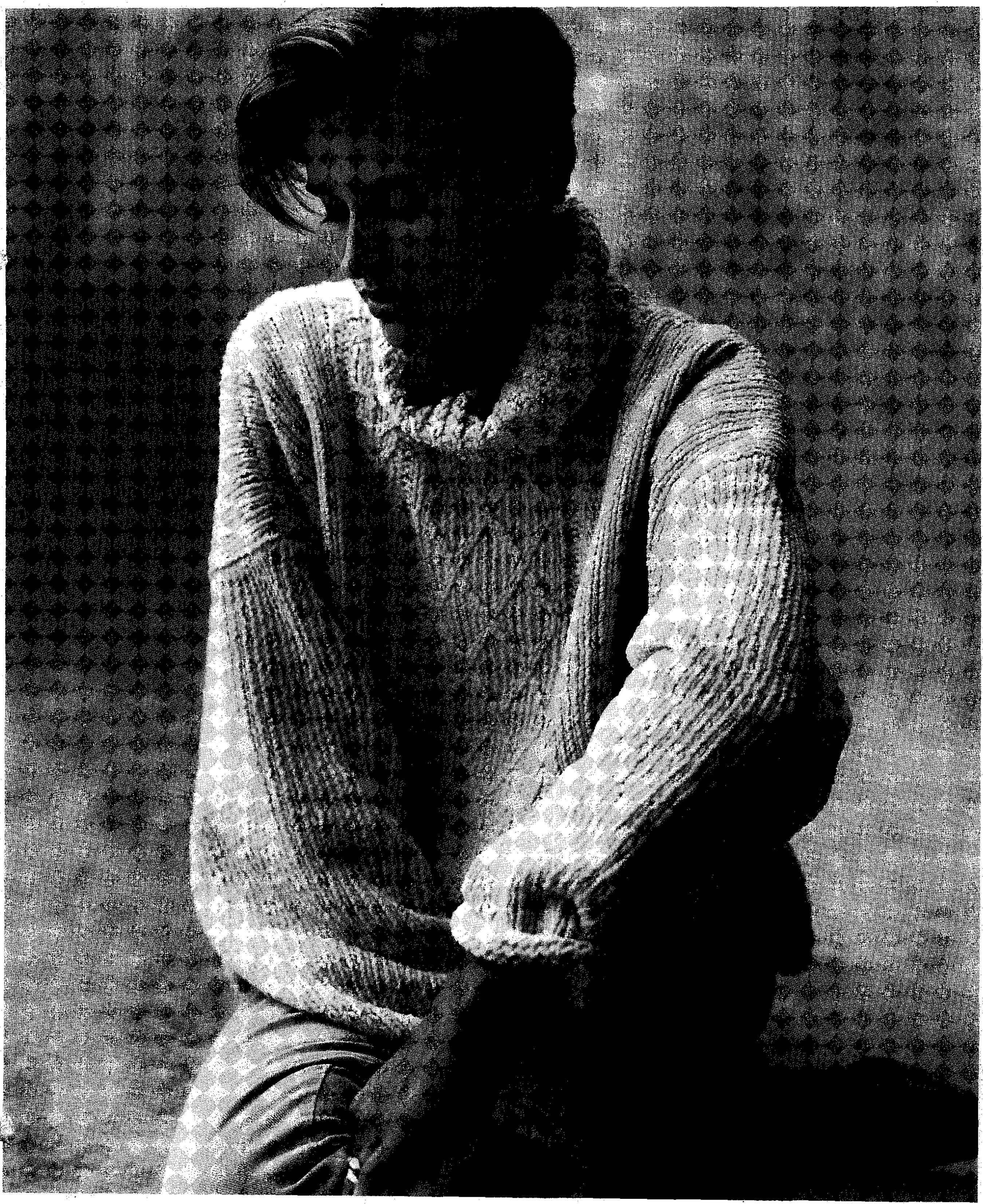
CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pastel uptown spa known as the Café Carlyle is once again home to patron saint **BOBBY SHORT.** Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans' Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** presides at the piano from nine-forty-five Tuesdays through Saturdays.

CONDON'S, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—In the shadow of the Zeckendorf Tower sits this stucco-walled grotto, whose intimate scale makes it a fine spot for jazz. Saxophonist **LOU DONALDSON** leads a quartet here Nov. 6-11. Music after ten.

CONTINENTAL DIVIDE, 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, posers, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. The motif is prehistoric punk—there's a Stone Age mural, assorted toy dinosaurs and pterodactyls—and on peak nights there's a "take no prisoners" atmosphere. A few highlights: Joan Osborne on Nov. 7; **PHOEBE LÉGÈRE** on Nov. 8; the Waldos



The Go-Go's at the Ritz



BANANA REPUBLIC

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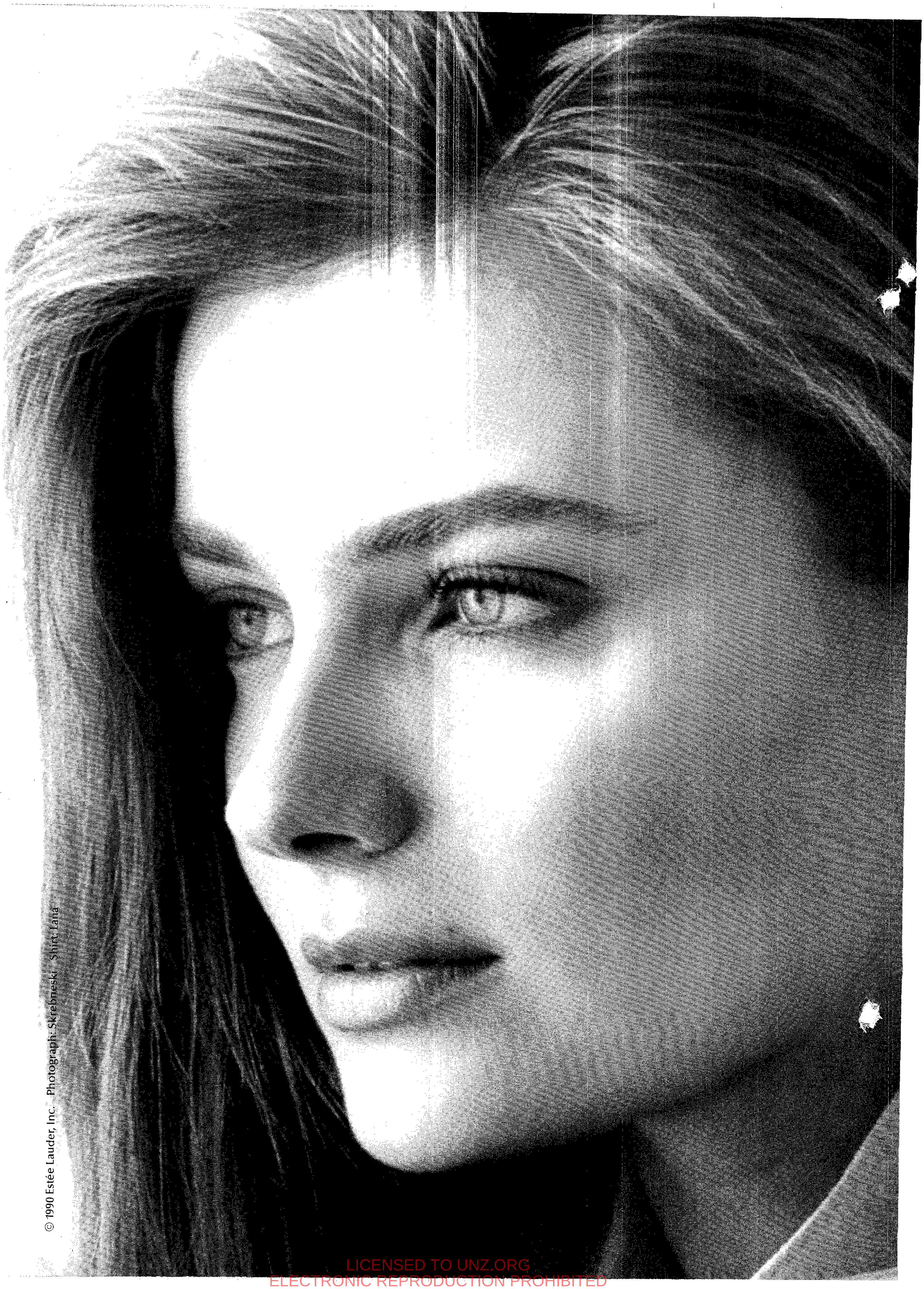

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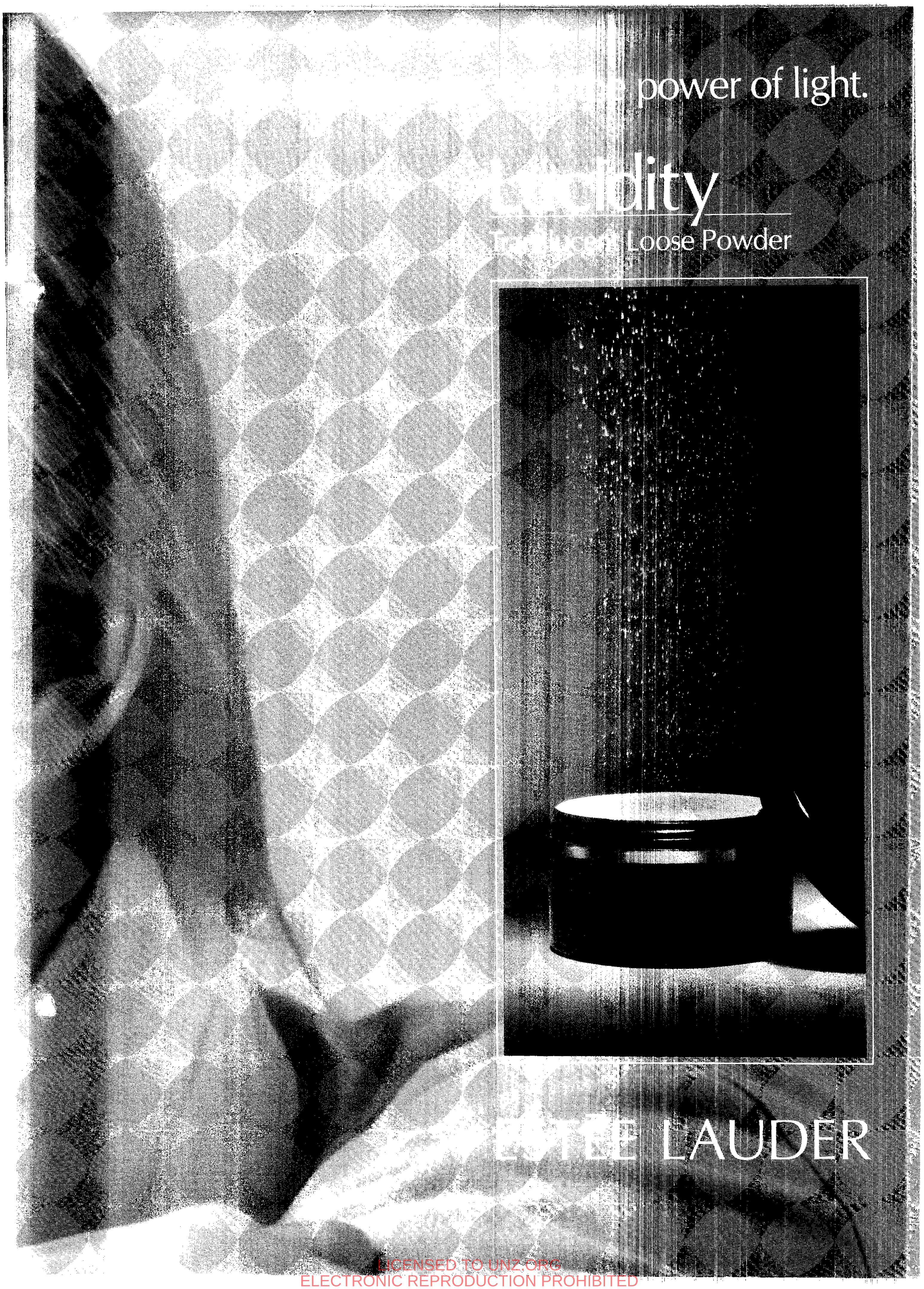
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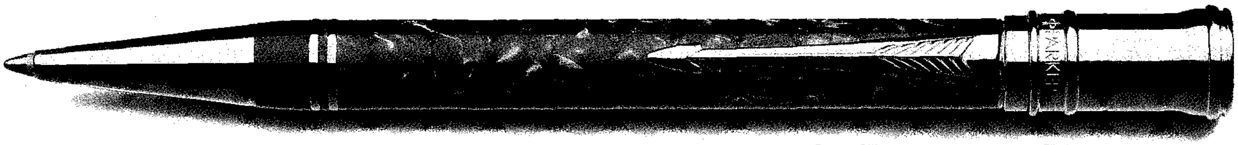

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PARKER

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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on Nov. 9; Sea Monster on Nov. 10; the Niagaras on Nov. 12; and the Spin Doctors on Nov. 13. Shows Sundays at nine, Mondays and Tuesdays at ten, and Wednesdays and Thursdays at eleven.

Eagle Tavern, 355 W. 14th St., at Ninth Ave. (924-0275)—An Irish bar, way out on the Western edge of town, where the great potholed boulevards turn to cobblestones, and the world across the Hudson flashes its come-hither signs. The back room has Hibernian sounds on Fridays and bluegrass on Saturdays. Nov. 9 belongs to tin-whistle-and-flute man Miko Russell, Nov. 10 to a group called Special Consensus. Sets at nine and eleven.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-[illegible]02)—Through the iffy-looking side door, down the famous fun-house tunnel that's lined with mirrors and corrugated tin, and down a short flight of stairs, one finds this softly lit, low-ceilinged, roughly Manhattan-shaped jazz preserve. Singer **ABBEY LINCOLN,** whose recent credits include a role as Denzel Washington's mother in "Mo' Better Blues," starts up on Nov. 6. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL,** the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

Fortune Garden Pavilion, 209 E. 49th St. (753-0101)—With jazz you get eggroll. At this posh-looking two-floor Chinese restaurant, tucked into a midtown skyscraper, you'll find a lot of businessmen and a lot of hanging plants. In the middle of the main dining room, you'll also find a Steinway grand, which will be occupied by **ROGER KELLAWAY** Nov. 6-10. Performing with him will be bassist **JON BURR.** The piano-bass duo of **PETE MALINVERNI** and **HARVIE SWARTZ** plays on Nov. 11, and the guitar duo of Bill Wurtzel and Howard Morgen takes over on Nov. 12. Pianist **JOHN BUNCH** and bassist **JAY LEONHART** move in for a week beginning Nov. 13. Music from eight Mondays through Saturdays, and from seven on Sundays.

ARCHIE UNDERGROUND

"New York Unearthed," the city's newest permanent archeological display, opened recently in a one-story steel-clad annex behind 17 State Street. The building's developer put up the show as penance for damaging the site's historical layers. Graphic artist Milton Glaser designed the ten dioramas on the show's main floor; they're full of jazzy tinted prints and photographs as well as such locally excavated items as shards of a stone tobacco pipe from 3500 B.C. and a circa-1950 ketchup bottle. In the basement, a glass-walled laboratory reveals scientists from the South Street Seaport Museum (the exhibit's administrator) using industrial-strength counterparts of Lysol, Ty-D-Bol, and Elmer's glue to clean and stabilize dug-up bits of glass, wood, metal, bone, and pottery; the staff is currently conserving a chunk of lumber from Manhattan's circa-1656 seawall. At the other end of the room stands a mock elevator cab, in which visitors can experience a ten-minute "vertical video presentation": a simulated ride from the peaks of the Wall Street skyline to the depths of an imaginary archeological dig. Onscreen host Archie the Archeologist explains the passing sights and supplies tidbits of historical information; eleven translators and brokers, for instance, were needed to prevent confusion at the polyglot New Amsterdam markets. This is not, however, a journey for the fainthearted: the cab bounces realistically on hydraulic springs when it reaches each new level, and it even feigns an out-of-control plunge at the end.

Greene Street, 101 Greene St. (925-2415)—This is such a gorgeous, thirties-ish movie set of a place that you expect gunmen to burst in at any moment. **ROCKAPELLA** can be heard upstairs on Fridays. In spirit the group is sort of a latter-day Sha Na Na—minus some grease, of course—and their act includes those wonderfully hokey skits that one associates with a cappella. Not long ago, Rockapella turned in a fine performance on a PBS special called "Spike & Co. Do It A Capella." Their over-the-top version of "Zombie Jamboree," in fact, is the single from the show's recently released soundtrack. Dining.

Kilimanjaro, 531 W. 19th St. (627-2333)—The northern branch of the popular Washington, D.C., night spot. As the name suggests, African music is the sine qua non, be it live or d.j.-spun. Calypso, reggae, and world-beat formats also turn up; in any case, the huge dance floor seldom lies fallow. Memphian R. & B. and blues singer **BOBBY (BLUE) BLAND** performs on Nov. 9.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—A busy bar-and-grill in the piano-bass district. Pianist **JOHN COLLIANNI, JR.,** and bassist **BILL MORING** are on hand Wednesdays through Saturdays. Music from about nine-thirty.

Knitting Factory, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—A second-floor music-and-performance space, where people come to ponder the meaning of harmolodics and the post-ness of postmodernism. The room is run by two amiable young guys from Wisconsin, whose views on such things as cover charges are enlightened. Nov. 9-11 belongs to **EUGENE VAN BEETHOVEN,** sometimes known as Camper van Chadbourne: i.e., a group consisting of Eugene Chadbourne and some members of Camper Van Beethoven. Chadbourne, a free-spirited guitarist, singer, and sometime electric-rake player (imagine fingernails scraping across a blackboard, amplified), is the guiding spirit, which means you can expect a startling, if not very harmonic, evening. Music after nine.

Marquee, 547 W. 21st St. (929-3257)—A rock club, just off the West Side Highway, that is one of the city's main venues for college-radio fare. Nov. 9: Social Distortion and Screamin' Trees. Nov. 10: **SOMETHING HAPPENS.** Nov. 13: **JAZZ BUTCHER.**

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—The perennially spooky and riveting **KRISTIN HERSH,** who is the Throwing Muses' chief singer-songwriter, will be doing a solo set here Nov. 8.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—A mid-Manhattan pub for well-heeled gents and high-heeled ladies. It's not always easy to detect the music over the babble, but if you listen closely you should be able to hear the jazz and cabaret singer **SYLVIA SYMS,** who recently came out with a Bill Evans tribute album. She's accompanied here by pianist **BUDDY BARNES,** bassist **STEVE LA SPINA,** drummer **JOE COCUZZO,** and saxophonist **LOREN SCHOENBERG.** Dining. Closed Sundays.

Ritz, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—There's usually a good reason to go to the Ritz, but there's almost always a better reason to stay away. Even leaving aside its midtown address—the sort of neighborhood you wake up in after you've been kidnapped—there's still the club's distressing pack-them-in, get-them-the-hell-out management tactics, and the fact that the atmosphere here is something between those of a high-school gym class and a police state. The **GO-GO'S** were one of the most consistently likable, danceable, and tuneworthy of the girls-night-out groups that surfaced in the early eighties. While some dismissed them as a little too slight or a little too bubble-gum, they did write their share of irresistible pop numbers—from "Our Lips Are Sealed" to "Vacation" to "Head Over Heels." They disbanded in 1985, and several members launched solo careers, most notably and visibly a made-over Belinda Carlisle. Now the group is back in action, with a just-released greatest-hits collection; they can be found here on Nov. 12. The **COCTEAU TWINS** perform on Nov. 14. Shows begin at nine Sundays through Thursdays, and at eleven Fridays and Saturdays.

Russian Tea Room, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—Now in the midst of a ten-week cabaret series, which takes place in the New York Room, above the restaurant. **DAVID STALLER** appears on Nov. 11. Dining.

Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Straw huts, bamboo, a fake palm tree, a mosaic of gourds, and perhaps the city's most international booking policy: Brazil, Africa, and the Caribbean are just a few of the places explored. This week's offerings include the **OHIO PLAYERS** on Nov. 9; **MIKATA** on Nov. 10; and a Zulu Nation party, with **AFRIKA BAMBAATA** and friends, on Nov. 11. Sonny Southon performs on Nov. 13, and **SYBIL** on Nov. 14. Music from nine Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from ten Fridays and Saturdays. Dining. Closed Sundays.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—An itinerary stop for the international jazz groupies who, on any given night, can be seen roaming the streets of the Village. Up front, there's a glass-enclosed sidewalk café; in back is a larger room, with a pressed-tin ceiling, red brick, and more pinewood than a ski lodge. The flugelhornist and trumpeter **ART FARMER** is in ascendance for the next couple of weeks, with a band that features tenor saxophonist **CLIFFORD JORDAN.** The electrified big band of the late Gil Evans, now under the direction of his son, the trumpeter Miles Evans, is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

Tramps, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Located on a Chelsea block that's like an urban Disneyland (a pool hall, an indoor miniature-golf course, a trendy all-night diner, Limelight around the corner), this roller-rink-size bar-and-restaurant is slicker than the original Tramps, but the emphasis on solid rock and blues remains. The New Orleans-based R. & B. singer-songwriter **LLOYD PRICE** will be here Nov. 9-10.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—This windowless, pie-shaped basement has an illustrious history that embraces everyone from Judy Holiday to Lenny Bruce, from Pete Seeger and Leadbelly to Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins. The décor is homey and a little faded, like an attic full of memorabilia. **CLARK TERRY,** a flugelhornist and trumpeter who has been active since 1945 and who was one of the Duke's main men in the fifties, chairs a quartet Nov. 6-9; the **BUDDY TATE** quartet claims Nov. 10-11; and saxophonist/flutist/composer **HENRY THREADGILL'S** septet commences on Nov. 13. Mondays are reserved for the late Mel Lewis's big band. Music after ten.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. The food is Italian, the atmosphere is pastels and soft lights, and the musicians, who set up in a room between the bar and the dining room, are first-rate. Pianist **JUNIOR MANCE** and bassist **MARTY RIVERA** work through Nov. 10; pianist **CAROL BRITTO** and bassist **VICTOR GASKIN** get under way on Nov. 12. Music from eight weeknights, and Sundays from seven.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

SORRY, Sally. Sorry, Christopher. We tried. We searched the *Strassen*, plodding, poking, crawling, and choking through more Berlin bars, clubs, jazz cellars, coffeehouses, and discos than the city has bratwurst stands, relentlessly pursuing the deliciously salacious reason Ms. Bowles painted her nails dark green.

—At Leidecke, a bar as boisterous as McSorley's before it dropped its restrictions and got coöpted by N.Y.U., a belching-on-homemade-wine-sweeter-than-schlag-and-deadlier-than-tequila throng roared approval each time the bartender wailed in his upper register that he would prefer a bar full of Poles to one full of East Germans.

—Across the street, at the too-scummy-for-Avenue-B, too-crowded-for-a-fire-drill Ex & Popp, a group of Irish wedding guests was entertained by the bride's favorite street band from home. Two Berliners marvelled at how good the singers' German was. Our American hostess swore they sang in English. We would have asked the bride, but she was tending bar.

—To get to Schwuz, you have to find the edge of Kreuzberg, go through two courtyards, and climb four flights of steps, where at 5 A.M. you encounter three hundred gangular young men dancing to a new version of the pop classic "El Watusi," which here could have been retitled "Wash Your Face in My Sink." *Would that any of these guys might.*

—To order a drink at the ultra-sleek Lützo bar requires that you clank enough silver jewelry to get the Tom-Cruise-in-"Cocktail" bartenders to notice you, spend five minutes going through the list of beverages, and forget what one Brandy Alexander did to Lee Remick in "Days of Wine and Roses," and what three Golden Cadillacs did to your prom date.

—An American oohed at how the black-paint-and-tinfoil décor of Pool still maintains the disco look of the seventies. The club isn't even three years old.

We also discovered that Berlin: loves R. & B. and the remake of "Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weeny Yellow Polkadot Bikini" more than we do; features maroon as an acceptable hair color for women of all ages; needs no smoke machines other than its citizens; is as sexless as it is wall-less; and is the bad-haircut capital of the world.

But did we see divine decadence? Not a drop. So what were they trying to keep the East Germans away from, anyway?

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

Next Wave Festival—Margie and Christopher Gillis. (Nov. 6 at 7 and Nov. 8-10 at 8.) . . . ¶ Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane & Co. (Nov. 7 at 7 and Nov. 8-10 at 8.) (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. The festival continues through Dec. 9.)

"Speaking in Tongues: Storytelling by Menfolks"—Featuring Olu Dara, Gran'daddy Junebug, Samite of Uganda, and others in an afternoon of music, dance, and storytelling. (Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. 690-4100. Nov. 11 at 3.)

ART

THE theme at this year's FIAC, the annual international art fair, held late last month at the Grand Palais, was "Americans in Paris"—a nicely timed bit of commercial boosterism, given everyone's recession jitters and the ninety-pound-weakling dollar. (A number of FIAC participants said they detected a "last dance" feeling about the event, predicting widespread tightness and sobriety for the next five or six years.) American art dealers, mostly from New York, were fêted and flattered and assigned well-placed booths. Several, including Leo Castelli and Holly Solomon as well as the more recent and composite SteinGladstone, were described in the press as "historic or near-historic" personages. The ground-floor food concession at FIAC served chicken pot pies and Häagen-Dazs ice-cream bars. French art magazines put Stars and Stripes on their covers, and an unusually large number of galleries on the Left and Right Banks are exhibiting works by American artists well into this month. Jules Olitski and the New York-based Sean Scully are among those with current solo shows, for example. An all-American selection of minimalist masterworks from the Panza collection (among those in the process of being acquired by the Guggenheim) is on view at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.

At FIAC, and elsewhere in Paris, there seemed to be a moratorium on eighties art. While shows of conceptual and Fluxus-related objects abounded, along with evidence of work by very young neo-conceptual sorts, works by the likes of Schnabel, Salle, Fischl, et al. were scarce, if present at all. There are, however, two large group shows, to be seen in the Marais and Bastille areas, that were put together by classic late-eighties curatorial/entrepreneurial types—Christian Leigh and the team of Collins and Milazzo—on the classically late-eighties interesting-sounding nonsense non-themes of "Vertigo" and "All Quiet on the Western Front." Finally, the spirit of 1968 made a rather ghastly reappearance on the Saturday of FIAC week, in the form of art vandalism in the Castelli booth. One painting by Lichtenstein and one by Rosenquist were slashed by a pair of guerrilla pamphleteers. "*Mort à l'art bourgeois*," supposedly, was their tepid *cri de guerre*.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries" includes four hundred works of art from the pre-Columbian era through 1950. Through Jan. 13. . . . ¶ "Wright of Derby," a retrospective of portraits, landscapes, and paintings with scientific themes by Joseph Wright (1734-97). Through Dec. 2. . . . ¶ A new skylit sculpture court has opened on the main floor, and is home to several large French and Italian works from the seventeenth century to the twentieth, including Sarrazin's "Leda and the Swan" and Rodin's "The Burghers of Calais." . . . ¶ Nineteen chalk-and-graphite drawings by John Singleton Copley (1738-1815). Through Jan. 13. The recently acquired "Evening: Landscape with Aqueduct" by Théodore Géricault (1791-1824) is the focus of a small exhibition of his landscapes and related works. Through Jan. 13. . . . ¶ Eighteenth-century Italian drawings, including works by Francesco Guardi, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, and others. Through Dec. 9. . . . ¶ Fifteen American quilts and coverlets, made between 1803 and 1930, are on view. Through Jan. 20. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture" is divided into four themes (graffiti, caricature, comics, advertising) and includes more than two hundred and fifty works. Through Jan. 15. . . . ¶ Twenty-one new photographs by Paul D'Amato, Carl Pope, and JoAnn Verburg that portray urban children, the homeless, and family relationships. Through Jan. 8. . . . ¶ A video installation by Gary Hill, consisting of body images displayed through several stripped cathode-ray tubes. Through Jan. 6. . . . ¶ "First Light," a suite of twenty black-and-white etchings by James Turrell. Through Nov. 13. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until autumn, 1991.

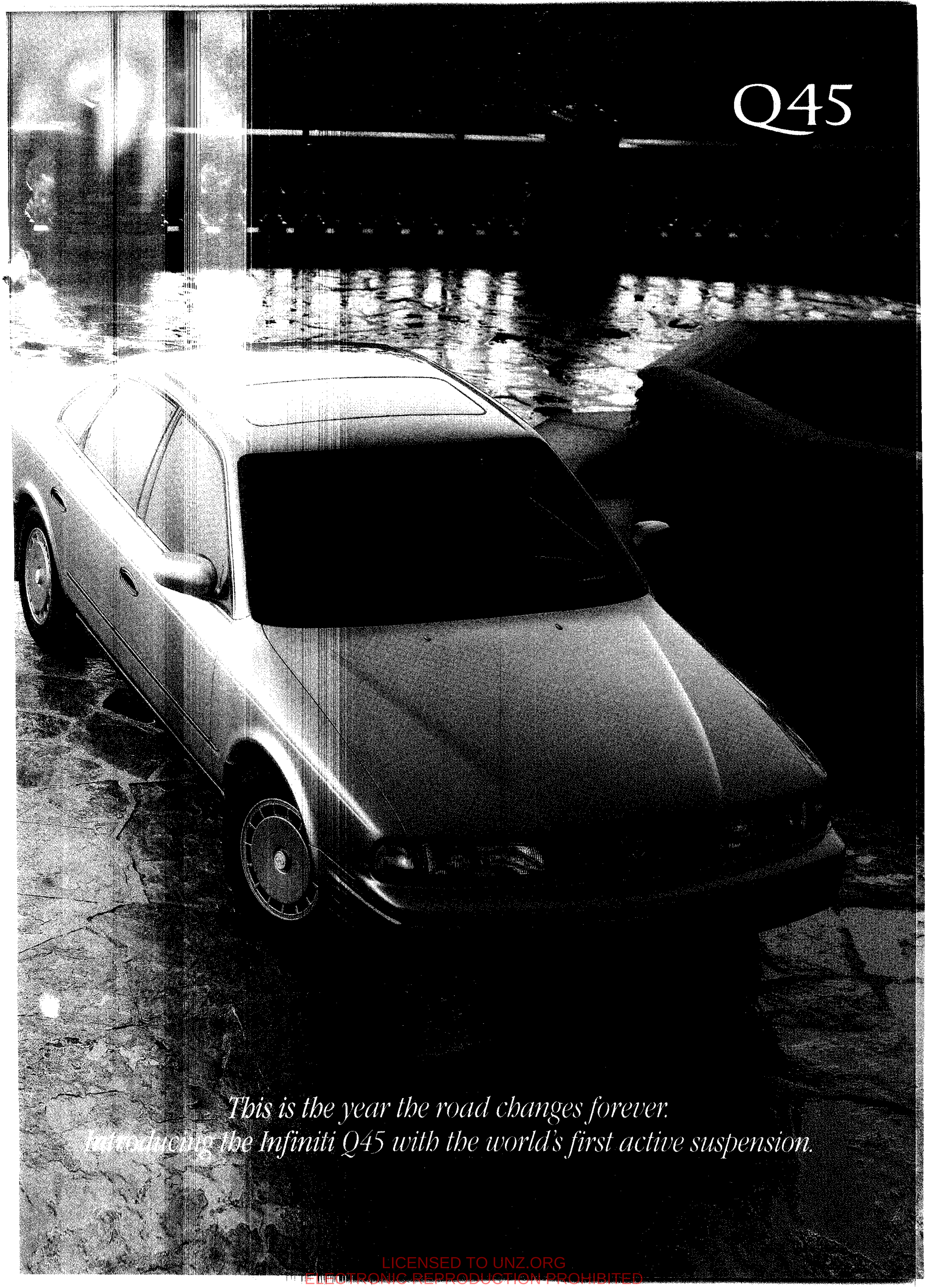
Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Mind over Matter" attempts to delineate a youngish "third generation of idea-oriented" artists—Liz Larner, Ronald Jones, Tishan Hsu, Nayland Blake, Ashley Bickerton, and Annette Lemieux. Their works move away from what in today's climate may seem like the indulgences of commodification to an interest in socially relevant issues. The effort is laudable, the installation exquisite, the selections often quite thoughtful—but the show is a mess. It circles around some potentially interesting thoughts without ever taking off, largely because of the mediocrity of the work. Through Jan. 6. . . . ¶ Ninety-five paintings, constructions, and drawings by Burgoyne Diller (1906-65). Through Nov. 25. . . . ¶ Several animal sculptures from the museum's collection are on view in the lobby, including works by Hunt Diederich, Gaston Lachaise, and Alexander Calder. Through Jan. 6. (Open Tuesdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—A lobby installation by Joseph Kosuth, who has selected works from the museum's collection that at one time or another may have been deemed offensive. Through Dec. 3. . . . ¶ An exhibition of sixty paintings by Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917). Through Jan. 7. . . . ¶ "Milton Avery in Black and White" is a display of eighty drawings in pencil, ink, and crayon, made by Avery between 1929 and 1959. Through Dec. 31. . . . ¶ Forty works of art from Oceania (mostly from the Sepik and Ramu river basins in New Guinea), including three-inch-long fish hooks, three monumental carved-wood "guardians," and a skull rack made of palm, raffia, and bamboo. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 10 to 5.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—"Court Arts of Indonesia" is a meticulously selected and beautifully installed show, with just the right number of pieces to titillate but not overwhelm. Extraordinary detail abounds, especially in numerous ceremonial lances, which were symbolic expressions of power; very delicate gold jewelry; woven fabrics; and shadow puppets. There are also some curiosities, including a belt of human hair; a Javanese scroll depicting a royal procession, with a perspective that is part Eastern, part Western, and as wacky as Uccello; a golden skeleton; and a modesty plate, which is a kind of Indonesian fig leaf. Through Dec. 16. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6; Sundays, noon to 5.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—"The Eccentric Painters of Yangzhou" presents thirty works by eleven unorthodox, innovative artists who lived in Southern China in the eighteenth century. Through Dec. 15. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—Among the many strong works on paper here by Adolph Menzel (1815-1905) are a stunning, flesh-warm drawing of the Barberini Faun; deep platonic renderings of suits of armor; and a beautiful sketch, titled "Moltke's Binoculars," of leather long caressed and dis-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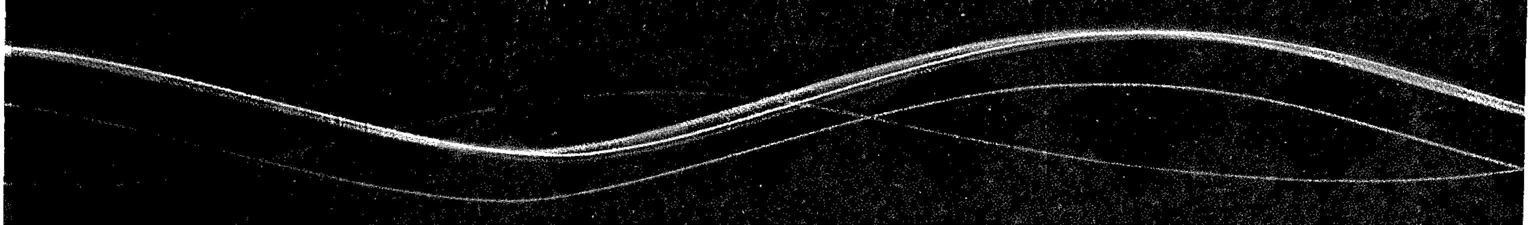

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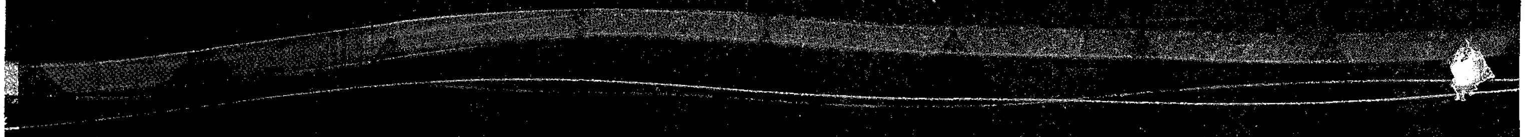
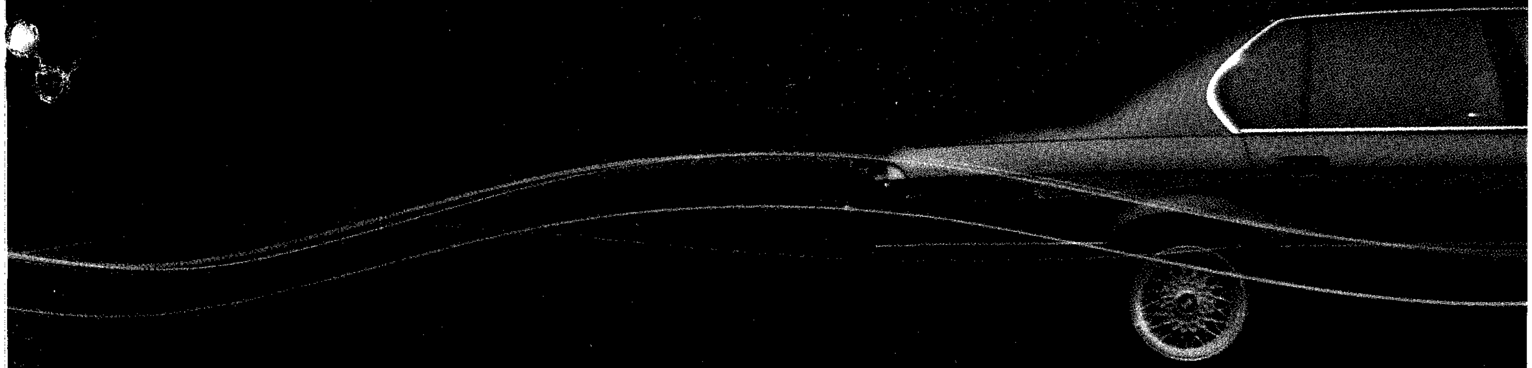


Q45

Traditional mechanical suspension systems can only react passively to dips and bumps, transmitting harshness and motion to driver and passengers.



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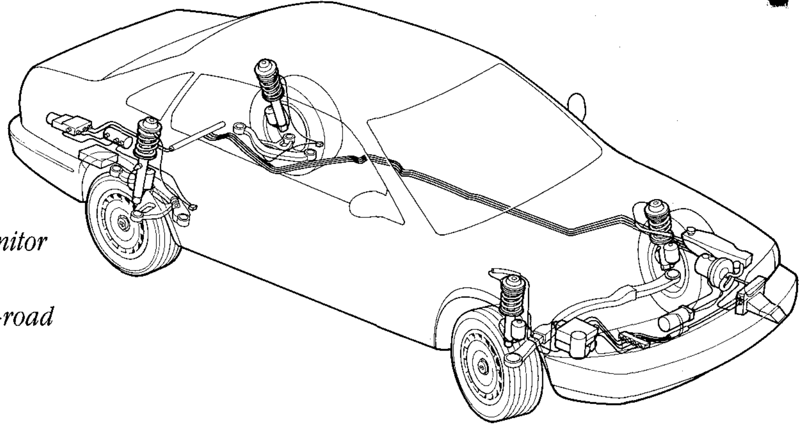
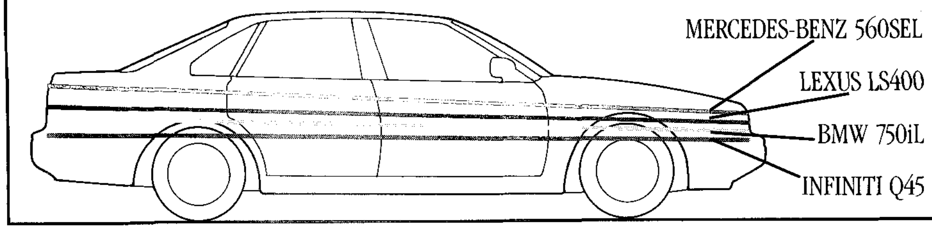


The Infiniti Full-Active *Suspension uses advanced computer and hydraulic systems to continuously monitor changes in the Q45's body positioning, creating "counterforces" to maintain the most desirable tire-to-road orientation and a flat, comfortable ride.*

The Infiniti Full-Active Suspension system says good-bye to roll, dive, lift and bounce.



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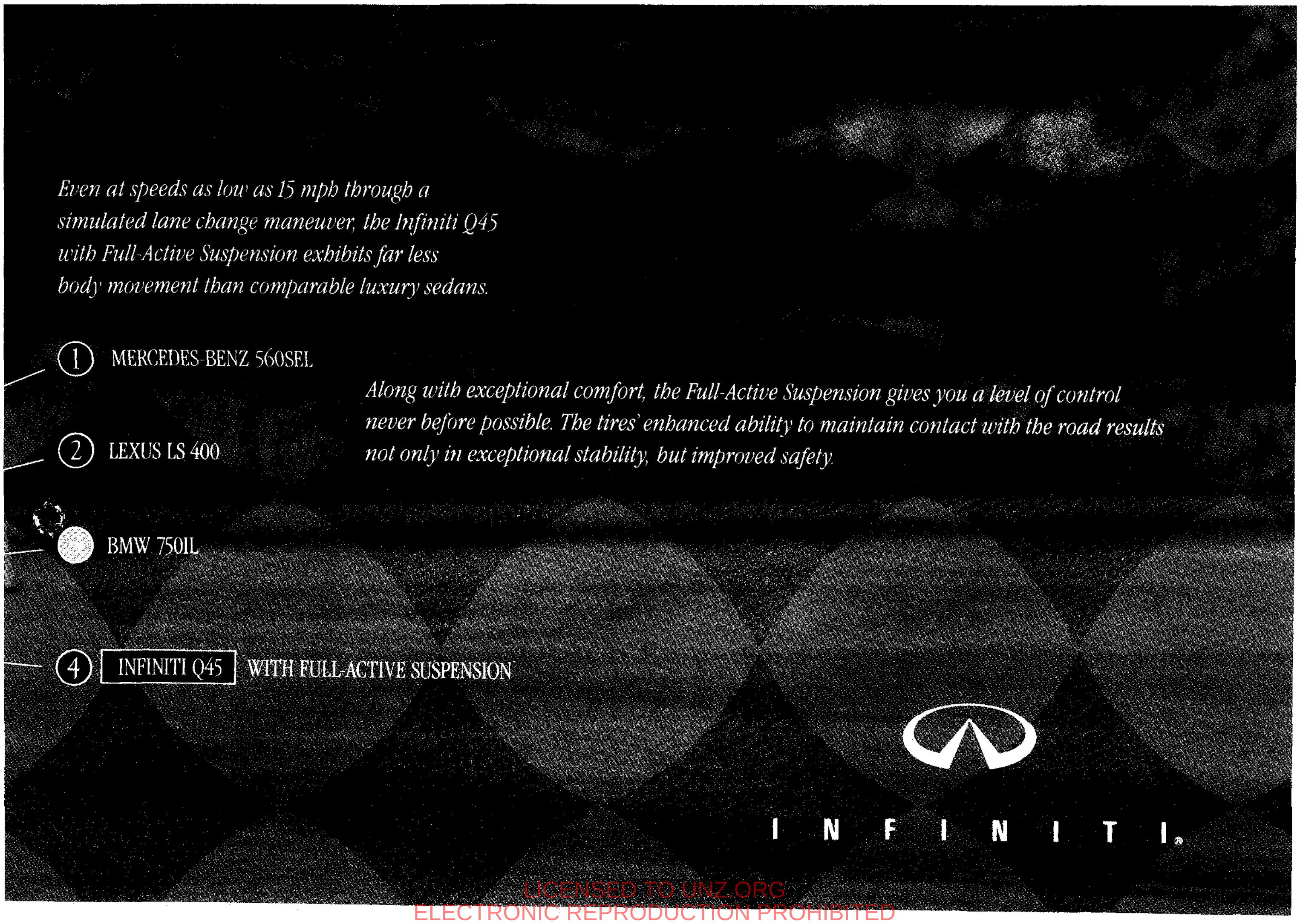

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tressed. Through Nov. 18. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"Treasures of Eton College Library," a selection, from the five-hundred-and-fifty-year-old institution, of more than two hundred manuscripts, rare books, drawings, and watercolors. Included are the first edition of Thomas Gray's "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" and the manuscript of "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." Through Nov. 25. . . . ¶ Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray" is a hundred years old, but the autograph manuscript, on display here, doesn't look a day over twenty-five. Through Dec. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—Through maps, paintings, photographs, and prints, "Within Bohemia's Borders" documents the turbulent history of Greenwich Village from 1830 to 1930. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—While the title "Women in Mexico" suggests an enormous and ferociously dramatic tapestry, this show is in essence a sampler. This is not a complaint: it's fast-paced and a lot of fun. We begin with the unfettered and varied Surrealism of the astonishing Frida Kahlo, and of Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo. And we're brought up to the present with work by artists now in their thirties—for example, the spooked still-lifes and gritty ex-voto mythologies of a wonderful photographer named Flor Garduño. Through Dec. 2. (Open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge from 5 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway—"From Receiver to Remote Control: The TV Set" features serpentine banks of virtually every TV model and meticulously reconstructed period rooms that attempt to define a sociology of family life as it has revolved around the set. Through Nov. 25. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—Manuscript fragments, letters, first editions, photographs, and illustrations are all part of "Charles Dickens: His Life and Work." (Berg Collection. Open daily, except Sundays and Thursdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948)—Collages, constructions, paintings, and *Merzbilder* from the twenties, thirties, and forties. This show looks especially staid—so damn quiet and classy—while the great Dadaist himself was a rummaging, visionary pack rat whose single best-known work, the "Merzbau" (long since destroyed), was a virtual cathedral to eccentric freedom and the innate spirit of accumulated junk. Any occasion, however, to see work by Schwitters should not be missed, and there are many wonderful objects here, such as a group of cigarette-pack collages from the mid-thirties that really do seem to suggest that all Europe was going up in smoke; a theosophical-looking painting called "Nebulous," from 1942, that prefigures early-eighties work by Bill Jensen; and an incredibly sweet and compositionally masterly collage with a "Holy Night" theme (from 1947, when the artist was in exile in England) that includes a reproduction of a Correggio Madonna and child, along with such pungently mundane stuff as a stationery-store packaging ribbon in the role of a baroque swag, food-rationing coupons in positions that might otherwise be occupied by the three kings or the star of Bethlehem, and special parking permits that wryly tell us that Schwitters got a bit of V.I.P. treatment after all. Through Nov. 17. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St.)

Short List—**arthur dove** and **joseph stella,** York, 21 E. 65th St. (through Nov. 17); **bunny harvey,** Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. (open Mondays, through Nov. 17); **františek kupka,** Bernard, 33 E. 74th St. (through Nov. 10); **joan mitchell,** Mathes, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. (through Dec. 15); **jules olitski,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. (open Mondays, through Dec. 1); **rhonda roland shearer,** Wildenstein, 19 E. 64th St. (open Mondays, closed Saturdays, through Nov. 9).

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

Theophilus Brown—New paintings on paper that are, for the most part, small, charming, and oddly muted. Brown seems to be an artist who rises to his subjects' level of interest. One peculiarly raked, semi-desolate suburban perspective suggests Dashiell Hammett et al. We zero in, gumshoe-style, on a neighborly conversation and are left to wonder whether we have uncovered an adulterous couple or just a lonely, hill-town chat. Through Nov. 14. (Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St.)

Robert Kushner / Nam June Paik—Large paintings of flowers viewed close up. Kushner is putting his highly sophisticated sense of color to fuller use now with some improbable juxtapositions, and the result is an intense, internal light. / This master video artist's work has always varied wildly in quality, and it continues to do so in this small, jam-packed display of new pieces. The best work is the simplest: an enigmatic tableau consisting of two monitors showing a burning candle, the candle itself burning atop one of the monitors, and the mindful video camera that captures the image. Also in the show are several cute little robot toys made of electrical sockets and other potentially dangerous material. Through Nov. 10. (Holly Solomon, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays.)

C. ZECHOWSKI

Sam Francis at Emmerich

Peter Saul—A show of political paintings from 1965-71, titled "Vietnam, Angela Davis & Ronald Reagan in California," by a Bay Area maestro of psychedelia and rage in caricature. Saul's brilliant ectoplasmic variations on the human form are in a direct line of descent from Hieronymus Bosch. His attitude—encapsulated in his spelling of words like "Munny" and "Powur"—is as apple pie as R. Crumb, and so is his cartoon vision, typified, for instance, by his representation of Angela Davis (clearly an erotic obsession for this artist) as a pneumatic grotesque impaled on a "Dupartmint of Justis" skyscraper. This is terrific, gutsy, obnoxious picturemaking that may bring to mind the notion of a Leon Golub on acid. Through Nov. 15. (Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St.)

Short List—**jean arp,** Janis, 110 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Nov. 10); **milton avery,** Borgenicht, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Nov. 28); **georg baselitz,** Pace, 32 E. 57th St. (through Nov. 24) and 142 Greene St. (through Dec. 1); **jean-michel basquiat,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 1); **fernando botero,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Nov. 24); **deborah brown,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 17); **charles burchfield,** Kennedy, 40 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 17); **sam francis,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. (through Nov. 10); **morris graves,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Nov. 24); **philip guston,** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Nov. 24); **gabriel laderman,** Schoelkopf, 50 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 14); **robert motherwell,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. (through Nov. 24); **george negroponte,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 15); **richard pousette-dart,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 1); **david smith,** Washburn, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 1); **francisco toledo,** Haime, 41 E. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Nov. 24).

GALLERIES—SoHo

Arman—This is an entertaining, peculiarly uplifting show of dozens of canvases, each covered with row upon row of paint tubes, along with their squiggled and spewed contents. The main gallery is dramatically installed: there is a grand wall of ultramarine-blue works opposite a wall of yellow, orange, and gold ones. These "Monochrome Accumulations," which are related to a bet the artist lost to the irrepressibly monochromatic Yves Klein, identify Arman as a dandified Reinhardt, painting that same "last" painting over and over with great relish and little variation. Through Nov. 17. (Baghoomian, 555 Broadway.)

Francesco Clemente—Three series of exquisite watercolors—two groups of dancers and one of various sexual couplings. There's a boneless agility to the figures, like tha[illegible] Indonesian shadow puppets. In fact, all of Clemente's work has a certain exoticism, the kind that drips with sexual tension. Through Nov. 10. (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St.)

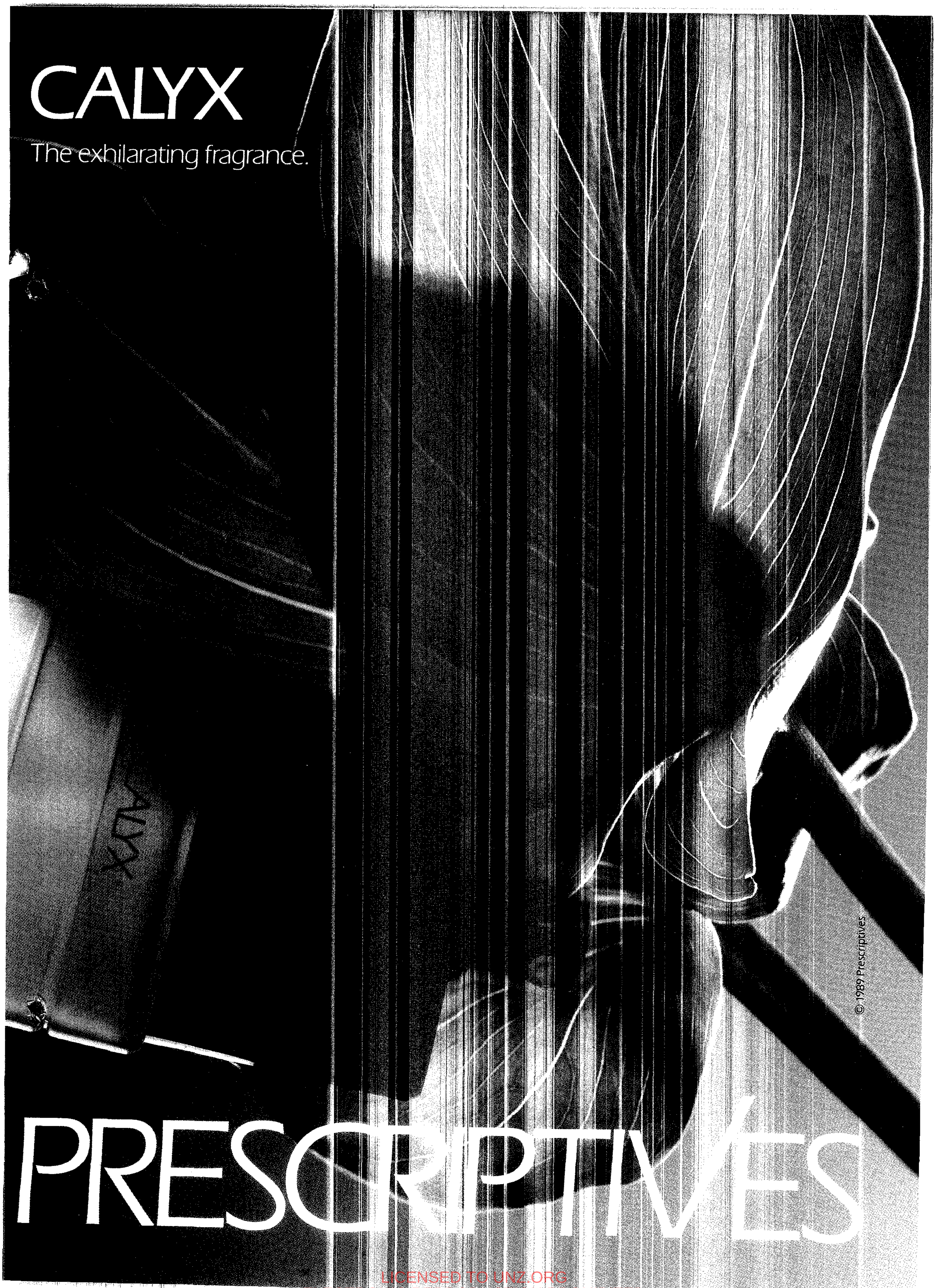
Keith Donovan—An auspicious first New York show for a young artist based in Geneva, Switzerland. Donovan has developed an idiosyncratic technique that is part painting and part collage, and in which the canvas itself is apparent. The shardlike collage elements are pasted onto the grounds as if to suggest calligraphic ruins, or the outlines of etiolated and excavated comic strips, and they have a rather high-flown, if slightly anemic, romantic air. This handsome group of mid-size black-and-white abstractions suggests Twombly, Johns, Lichtenstein, and *affichistes* in general, while seeming airily insouciant and not particularly derivative. Through Nov. 17. (Kasmin, 580 Broadway.)

Carroll Dunham—The edge has returned to Dunham's work. These highly colored paintings look a bit like cartoon Kandinskys against backgrounds of stained patchworks. The imagery still consists of big, organic forms: penises, vulvas, innards, and hairy udders ejaculating and releasing gas. Their consummate silliness takes issue with "serious" painting in an intelligent way; they're a thinking man's Kenny Scharfs. The works are appealing for their riskiness, which is unusual for paintings in 1990. They teeter on the edge of failure, yet have that sense of directed mischief that has been noticeably absent from painting for some time. Through Nov. 10. (Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway.)

Dan Flavin—For its inaugural show, the RubinSpangle gallery has mounted two impressive installations of new works by Dan Flavin. One consists of low-lying "cots" of fluorescent lights in mint, red, yellow, and pink. The other is a series of vertical lights, in various shades of white, which are dedicated to the ceramicist Hans Coper. These refer to Flavin's Tatlin Monuments and are perhaps the artist's most sculptural works, marking a curious twist in his single-minded vision. Through Nov. 10. (395 West Broadway.)

Jacqueline Humphries—Big new oil paintings on linen—densely blotched, almost scorched-looking abstractions—that have a vigorous all-over effect. There is also a fetching group of little unframed drawings consisting of coffee stains or cigarette burns on interesting-looking papers. Through Nov. 10. (Good, 532 Broadway.)

Robert Longo—After some rocky years and an L.A. retrospective whose reception was at best, lukewarm, Longo has eliminated the pizzazz, the pyrotechnics, and the workshop production. He has returned to the simplicity and gestural directness of the large drawings that many still consider his best work and that have become icons of the late-seventies downtown scene. The current image is the American flag, which the artist has cast in different sizes in bronze and patinated a deep black. Most of the works hang out from the wall and look like they were thrown into the wind and then frozen in place. There's a funereal feeling to them—references to Johns notwithstanding—particularly in a group of freestanding pieces, whose flags are tightly wrapped around the poles; they are displayed like a row of memorial cypresses. If Oliver Stone made art, it might very well look like this. Through Nov. 10. (Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St.)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ART–Cont'd

Nino Longobardi—Even at the height of his popularity in the early eighties, Longobardi was no more than a second-string Italian *transavanguardist*. But however thin his paintings seemed then, the artist has outdone himself with these new ones. They consist of silhouettes of a pair of fish, a chair, and a parade of primitive-looking men over which a single male figure has been scratched directly into the paint. The works seem depressed, and they have little style to fall back on. Through Nov. 10. (Germans van Eck, 420 West Broadway.)

Elizabeth Murray—Many of the more subtle aspects of this fine painter's work emerge in these recent drawings and paintings on paper. The figurative roots of Murray's wacky "abstract" imagery are made clear in these pictures, which include animals that look like balloon dogs, logs with hidden faces, curving lines that resemble serpents, and tree trunks that could be mistaken for tubas. The drawings also link Murray quite nicely to the American magical-nature tradition of Hartley, Burchfield, and Dove. These are small works and their energy is intense, as if the size can barely contain the largeness of the artist's imagery. But they seem suitably cramped, as all good Murray paintings do, even the largest ones. Through Nov. 10. (Cooper, 149 Wooster St.)

James Rosenquist—As in much of his work of the past several years, this Pop master's new paintings consist of one picture seemingly cut into pieces, revealing another beneath it. There is an implicit power struggle in these works, which have an obvious sexual component. For better or for worse, the iconography is much more readable than in the past. The top images—in the earlier works, pictures of a young woman, usually identifiable by her eyes—have now been reduced to simple ribbons arcing across flowers. Rosenquist is an exquisite painter—one of our most underrated—but we are often distracted from this fact by his obsessive imagery. This show also includes a strange and possibly more interesting painting of what looks like a planet in various stages of evolution, surrounded by origami birds in outer space. Through Nov. 17. (Castelli, 420 West Broadway.)

Susan Silas—A show of paintings and photo-and-text works that offer some clever post-conceptual critiques from a variety of perspectives. One of the most penetrating pieces addresses the often complex issue of intent. Silas has appropriated a photograph of a highly controversial 1969 work by Anselm Kiefer, in which he perched atop a neoclassical monument affecting a "Heil Hitler" pose. This image is contrasted with an enlarged photograph by Margaret Bourke-White, showing prisoners behind a barbed-wire fence, which the artist has re-photographed in a forest setting. The photo within the photo creates the impression that the prisoners are trapped in a box in the woods, setting in motion all sorts of plays on ideas about art and simulation. The placement of this image beside the Kiefer serves to question, as his critics have, the now mythicized German painter's political position, or, in a larger sense, the function of irony. Unfortunately, the work's pretentious title—"We're Not out of the Woods Yet"—brands it as moralistic, removing what could have been a haunting layer of uncertainty. Through Nov. 10. (Fiction-Nonfiction, 21 Mercer St.)

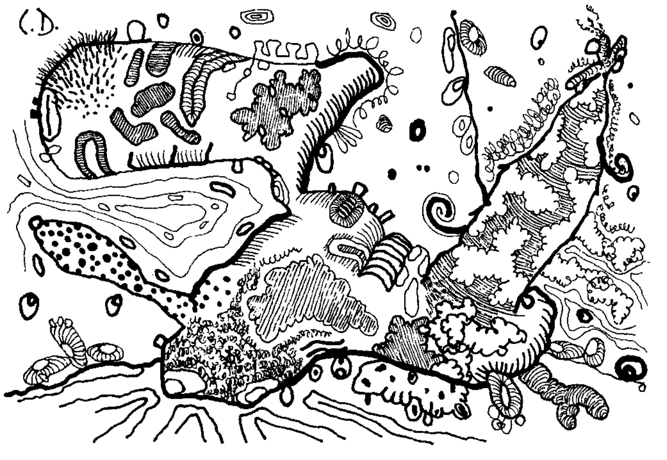
Clyfford Still (1904-80)—Probably the most respected unviewed artist of this century. According to the fine catalogue that accompanies this show—the first to be mounted without the artist's notoriously restrictive involvement—only eighty-one of the more than three thousand works the artist made were ever sold, and many of those remain in private hands. Some of the paintings are spectacular, with their craggy cavernousness and their wondrously dense color. But there's also a curious fragility to the work, and a number of the paintings seem somehow uneven. Through Nov. 10. (Boone, 417 West Broadway.)

Myron Stout (1908-87)—Two shows of paintings and drawings from the artist's estate. Stout is a surprising artist. Best known for his neoplastic abstractions, he was nonetheless a brilliant representational draftsman—not unlike his younger colleague Ellsworth Kelly in this respect. Stout seems also to have been more of a spiritualist than is commonly acknowledged, rather in the tradition of theosophist painters such as Mondrian and the turn-of-the-century Swedish mystic Hilma af Klint. These varied, subtler currents in the Stout œuvre are particularly apparent in the show at the Flynn gallery, where, for instance, there is a beautiful group of delicate and traditional landscape drawings that suggest a latter-day Ruysdael. Through Dec. 15. (Flynn, 113 Crosby St.) . . . ¶ Through Nov. 10. (Kent, 41 E. 57th St.)

Alan Uglow—Uglow could be the most sophisticated tape painter around. His minimalistic works are obsessively built up of layer upon layer of paint meticulously applied, either with brush or roller. One painting in various shades of white and with a yellow band is quite beautiful. Two others, white-on-white paintings that are hung hip high, have deeply colored center sections of baked-enamel auto paint, and are surrounded by unattached white frames. Through Nov. 10. (Lorence-Monk, 578 Broadway.)

"Gender, out of the Garden . . ."—A hodgepodge of works by a dozen artists in several mediums, including painting, photography, sculpture, and installation. This is one of those group shows that pays a sort of fatuous obeisance to supposed trends ("gender," *qu'est-ce que c'est?*) and in which fairly schlocky stuff from left field is equated with thoroughly evolved work by big names such as Lucas Samaras and William Wegman. Steven Assael's two gruesome, technically accomplished oil-on-board paintings of bloody newborn babies, for instance, are quite arresting in this context, for all their literalness. The exhibition, however, does have its happy surprises. Jean Silverthorne's eccentric double-dildo relief stands out, as do two sun-struck symbolist paintings by Judith Linhares. Through Nov. 10. (Fendrick, 568 Broadway, entrance on Prince St.)

Short List—**donald baechler** and **ford beckman,** Shafrazi, 130 Prince St. (through Dec. 8); **walter darby bannard,** Greenberg Wilson, 560 Broadway (through Nov. 24); **scott burton,** Protetch, 560 Broadway (through Dec. 1); **robert de niro,** Staempfli, 415 West Broadway (through Nov. 10); **yuri dyshlenko** and **sue israel,** Kind, 136 Greene St. (through Nov. 14); **gretchen faust,** Hearn, 39 Wooster St. (through Nov. 10); **don gummer,** Sperone Westwater, 121 Greene St. (through Nov. 17); **georg herold,** Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St. (through Nov. 17); **cletus johnson,** Castelli Graphics, 578 Broadway (through Nov. 17); **michael loew,** Pearl, 420 West Broadway (through Nov. 24); **harold shapinsky,** Helander, 415 West Broadway (through Dec. 1); **joel shapiro,** Cooper, 155 Wooster St. (through Dec. 1); **gahan wilson,** Circle, 780 Seventh Ave., at 51st St. (through Nov. 19); **david wojnarowicz,** P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway (through Dec. 1).



Self-portrait by Carroll Dunham

PHOTOGRAPHY

THE work of Louis Faurer, a photographer who caught the spirit of city life as if his camera were a fine net through which nothing could slip, can be seen through December 1 at Photofind gallery (138 Spring Street). Most of the pictures here are from the forties and fifties, and many of them were taken in New York City. Viewed together, the photos answer the question: why do we live here? There are pictures of Times Square, for example, that make you long for the time when its jumble was respected and not b[illegible]dozed. But Faurer caught other sides of this city, too, from the glamorous to the hilarious to the *romantic—there's* a beautiful shot of lovers mooning at each other near a lineup of lockers at Penn Station. A rear view of a man looking up at the RCA Building shows how Faurer could make city energy almost palpable. The man's hat looks practically disconnected from his body; it's tipped at such an angle that you can just about feel his neck straining as he gazes up.

Short List—**ilse bing,** Min-Lowinsky, 584 Broadway (through Dec. 29); **john divola,** Baum, 588 Broadway (through Nov. 24); **elliott erwitt,** Danziger, 415 West Broadway (through Nov. 10); **adam füss,** Audiello, 142 Greene St. (through Nov. 17); **pierre dubreuil,** Friedman, 1117 Madison Ave., at 83rd St. (open Mondays, through Nov. 16); **louis faurer,** Photofind, 138 Spring St. (through Dec. 1); **ray metzker,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. (through Nov. 21); **neil winokur,** Borden, 560 Broadway (through Nov. 10).

MUSIC

MURRAY PERAHIA came to the musical scene in the nineteen-seventies evidently touched by the gods—at least in the perceptions of music critics. Here was a poet in an age of dour strict constructionists, a lyricist among jackhammers and pile drivers. His Chopin and Schumann were loved most, and rightly so; we also cherish the songful series of Mozart concertos he recorded with the English Chamber Orchestra, and we have enjoyed more than once the unexpected Schumannesque capriciousness of his Bartók. He is a thoughtful player, who will do things like recording song cycles with a non-glamorous, thoughtful singer (the late Peter Pears). And he is *thoroughly* respected by the senior pianists of the world, even some who have otherwise few good words for the younger generation. (Mr. Perahia was visiting Vladimir Horowitz when the great man died suddenly last year.) We have noted before the odd turn Mr. Perahia's critical reception took when he began to focus—after admitting an antipathy, and to generally poor notices—on Beethoven. We rather hope he didn't have critics on his mind when he planned, for Carnegie Hall on November 9, a classic Perahia program: a thoughtful Haydn sonata, not frequently played; Schumann's careening C-Major Fantasia; one of Chopin's most poetic "bel canto" nocturnes (the F major); the same composer's rarely heard Introduction and

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Rondo, Op. 16; Liszt's gorgeous "Forest Murmurs" étude; and the Mephisto Waltz to close. It looked wonderful. We were a little sorry to see the Schumann replaced by Brahms' somewhat bombastic Third Sonata in a later announcement, and we still don't know quite how to feel about the absence of Beethoven, but we look forward to hearing a former favorite performer once again.

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Alice Tully Hall 362-1911; for Avery Fisher Hall 874-2424; for Carnegie Hall 247-7800; for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719; and for the 92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St., 415-5440.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**UN BALLO IN MASCHERA,** Verdi's mixture of magical herbs, fortune-telling, and jealousy run amok in the Swedish Court, in a new production with Aprile Millo, Harolyn Blackwell, Elena Obraztsova, Luciano Pavarotti, and Juan Pons; conducted by James Levine. (Nov. 5 and Nov. 9 at 8.) . . . With Andrea Gruber, Harolyn Blackwell, Alexandrina Milcheva, Luciano Pavarotti, and Juan Pons; James Levine. (Nov. 14 at 8.) . . . **PORGY AND BESS,** with Priscilla Baskerville, Marvis Martin, Camellia Johnson, Larry Marshall, and Terry Cook; James Levine. (Nov. 6 and Nov. 13 at 7:30, and Nov. 10 at 1.) . . . **BORIS GODUNOV,** with Alexandrina Milcheva, Gary Lakes, Philip Langridge, Paata Burchuladze, and Paul Plishka; Emil Tchakarov. (Nov. 7 at 8.) . . . With Stefania Toczyska, Gary Lakes, Philip Langridge, Paata Burchuladze, and Paul Plishka; Emil Tchakarov. (Nov. 10 at 8.) . . . **LA TRAVIATA,** with Marilyn Mims, Jerry Hadley, and Juan Pons; Rico Saccani. (Nov. 8 and Nov. 12 at 8.)

New York City Opera—**THE MIKADO,** with Ruth Golden, Muriel Costa-Greenspon, Richard McKee, Steven Tharp, and James Billings; conducted by Mark Gibson. (Nov. 6 and Nov. 9 at 8.) . . . **A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC,** with Sally Ann Howes, Regina Resnik, Beverly Lambert, George Lee Andrews, Kevin Anderson, and Michael Maguire; Paul Gemignani. (Nov. 7 at 8.) . . . **MARTHA,** in English, with Kathryn Gamberoni, Cynthia Rose, Michael Rees Davis, and Jan Opalach; Arthur Fagen. (Nov. 8 at 8.) . . . **L'HEURE ESPAGNOLE** and **L'ENFANT ET LES SORTILÈGES,** a new production of the two short operas by Maurice Ravel, designed by Maurice Sendak. With Kathryn Gamberoni, Robert Orth, Michael Rees Davis, Jonathan Green, and Jan Opalach in the former, and Robin Tabachnik featured in the latter. Guido Ajmone-Marsan conducts both operas. (Nov. 10 and Nov. 11 at 2, and Nov. 14 at 8.) . . . With Anna Steiger, Richard Byrne, Kevin Anderson, John Lankston, and Joseph McKee in the former, and Julia Parks in the latter; Guido Ajmone-Marsan. (Nov. 10 at 8 and Nov. 13 at 11 A.M.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

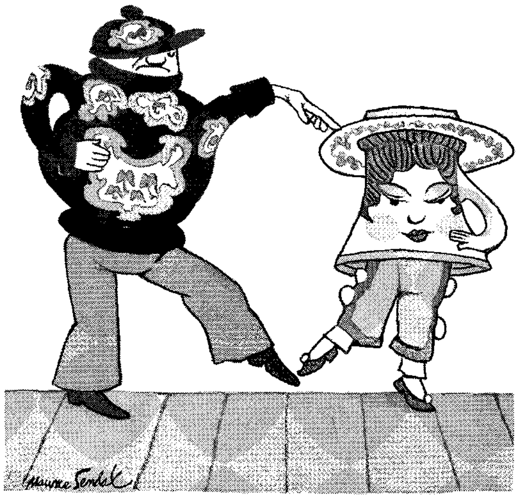
ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, Erich Leinsdorf conducting. Stravinsky's "Pulcinella" Suite, Dallapiccola's "Tartiniana" (a 1951 composition based on themes by Tartini, featuring violinist Charles Rex), and Brahms' Second Symphony. (Nov. 6 at 7:30.) . . . ¶ Debussy's "Martyre de St. Sébastien" Interludes, Stravinsky's "Symphonies of Winds" (dedicated to Debussy's memory), and Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony. (Nov. 8, Nov. 10, and Nov. 13, all at 8, and Nov. 9 at 11 A.M.)

Alexander Siloti Memorial Concert—A benefit to establish a scholarship commemorating the long-departed pianist (a pupil of Liszt and teacher of Rachmaninoff, among others). With pianists John Browning, Shura Cherkassky, Vladimir Feltsman, Gary Graffman, Eugene Istomin (a Siloti pupil), Alexander Slobodyanik, and Alexander Toradze; Mstislav Rostropovich playing the cello and conducting the Juilliard Chamber Orchestra. Among the concert's offerings are several of Siloti's Bach arrangements (many pianists prefer them to Busoni's), and Bach's Concerto for Three Claviers, in C Major. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 874-7515. Nov. 5 at 8.)

Concordia: A Chamber Symphony—Marin Alsop conducts the fifty-member orchestra in music by David Schiff, John Harbison, Bartók (his "Divertimento"), and (featuring Elmar Oliveira) Vieuxtemps's Fifth Violin Concerto and Chausson's "Poème." (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 8 at 8.)

Holocaust Memorial Concert—Music by Haydn, Bloch, and Lukas Foss (his "Elegy for Anne Frank"), as well as Ronald Senator's "Kaddish for Terezin," composed to a text that combines liturgical passages with writings of children interned in the Nazi concentration camp. Lukas Foss directs the Brooklyn Philharmonic and the Dessoff Choirs; with mezzo-soprano Hilda Harris, baritone Howard Nevison (cantor of Temple Emmanu-El), narrator Ron Silver, and other soloists. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. Nov. 10 at 8. No tickets necessary.)



At New York City Opera, "L'Enfant et les Sortilèges"

The Hanover Band—Roy Goodman conducting the period-instrument orchestra. Music by Haydn, Hummel (his "Introduction, Theme, and Variations," with oboist Frank de Bruine), and Mozart (the "Serenata Notturna" and the D-Minor Concerto, with fortepianist Christopher Kite). (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 11 at 3.)

American Composers Orchestra—Paul Lustig Dunkel conducting Lester Trimble's Third Symphony, and two premières: Hannibal Peterson's "African Portraits" and David Lang's "Bonehead," in which the composer imagines the sounds that would have resulted if cavemen had been armed with musical instruments instead of clubs. (Carnegie Hall. Nov 11 at 3.)

Philadelphia Orchestra—Charles Dutoit conducts music by Varèse and Rachmaninoff, as well as Liszt's First Piano Concerto (with Barry Douglas as soloist). (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 13 at 8.)

Juilliard Orchestra—Music by David Diamond, including his Second and Fourth Symphonies, conducted by Gerard Schwarz. (Avery Fisher Hall. Nov. 14 at 8.)

Musica Sacra—Richard Westenburg directs Fauré's Requiem and Bach's Cantata No. 205; with soprano Jeanne Ommerlé, mezzo-soprano Gwendolyn Jones, tenor Jeffrey Thomas, and baritone William Sharp. (Avery Fisher Hall. Nov. 7 at 8.)

New York Choral Society—An all-American program of Copland, Gershwin, Ives, and Robert De Cormier (the group's director emeritus), directed by John Daly Goodwin. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 10 at 8.)

Canterbury Choral Society—Charles Dodsley Walker directs Palestrina's "Pope Marcellus Mass" and, with an orchestra and soloists, Haydn's "Nelson" Mass. (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. Nov. 11 at 4. Admission by contribution.)

RECITALS

"Musical Melodramas"—The actress Claire Bloom and the pianist Brian Zeger present Tennyson's "Enoch Arden" to a score by Richard Strauss, and (augmented by violin, cello, and percussion) "Moments of Vision," by the English composer Robin Holloway. (92nd Street Y. Nov. 5 at 8.)

Beverly Somach—Violin, performing Bach and, with pianist Motoko Kakizaki, music by Mozart, Fauré, and Saint-Saëns. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 5 at 8.)

Louis Lortie—The Canadian pianist presents an all-Beethoven recital, including the "Waldstein" and "Les Adieux" Sonatas. (92nd Street Y. Nov. 6 at 8.)

Alia Musica—A Spanish early-music sextet performing music by Machaut and Landini, as well as Judeo-Spanish pieces from the Middle Ages. (Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue, Central Park W. at 70th St. Nov. 7 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Four Nations Ensemble—An early-instrument quartet and guests, performing C. P. E. Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, and Beethoven. (Friends' Meeting House, 15 Rutherford [illegible] Nov. 7 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Cuarteto Latinoamericano—The Mexican string quartet plays works by Carlos Chávez, Rodolfo Halffter, and others. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 8 at 8.)

Bargemusic—Chamber music by Bach, Handel, Chopin, and Brahms. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Nov. 8 at 7:30 and Nov. 11 at 4.)

Brodsky String Quartet—The English ensemble, which recently recorded all fifteen of Shostakovich's string quartets, performs his ninth, as well as Lutoslawski's Quartet (both dating from 1964). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Nov. 9 at 7.)

Murray Perahia—Piano, performing music by Haydn, Brahms, Chopin, and Liszt. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 9 at 8.)

Classical String Quartet—An all-Mozart program on period instruments, including the Flute Quartet, K. 285, with guest Sandra Miller. (St. Michael's Church, Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. Nov. 9 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Victor Schultz—The Canadian violinist, a champion of contemporary music, performs works by John Corigliano, George Antheil, Donald Martino, and others; with pianist Christine Diwyk. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Nov. 9 at 8.)

Composers Concordance—Music by Otto Luening, Frank Wigglesworth, Jan Swafford, and other contemporary composers. (CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th St. Nov. 9 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Christina Kiss—The pianist continues her traversal of the complete piano works of Liszt, in a program that includes three *Liebesträume* and twelve Transcendental Études. (Weill Recital Hall. Nov. 10 at 2.)

William Bolcom and Joan Morris—The inveterate husband-wife team performs nineteenth-century American popular songs and "A Woman's Life and Love," a new English translation by Michael Feingold of Schumann's "Frauenliebe und -leben." (92nd Street Y. Nov. 10 at 8.)

Guarneri Quartet—Playing an all-Mozart program, including the E-Flat Piano Quartet, K. 493, with Lee Luvisi. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Nov. 10 at 8.)

Pomerium Musices—Alexander Blachly directing chromatically adventurous music by masters of the late-sixteenth-century Italian avant-garde: Giaches de Wert, Luca Marenzio, Gesualdo, and Monteverdi. (Christ Church United Methodist, Park Ave. at 60th St. Nov. 10 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

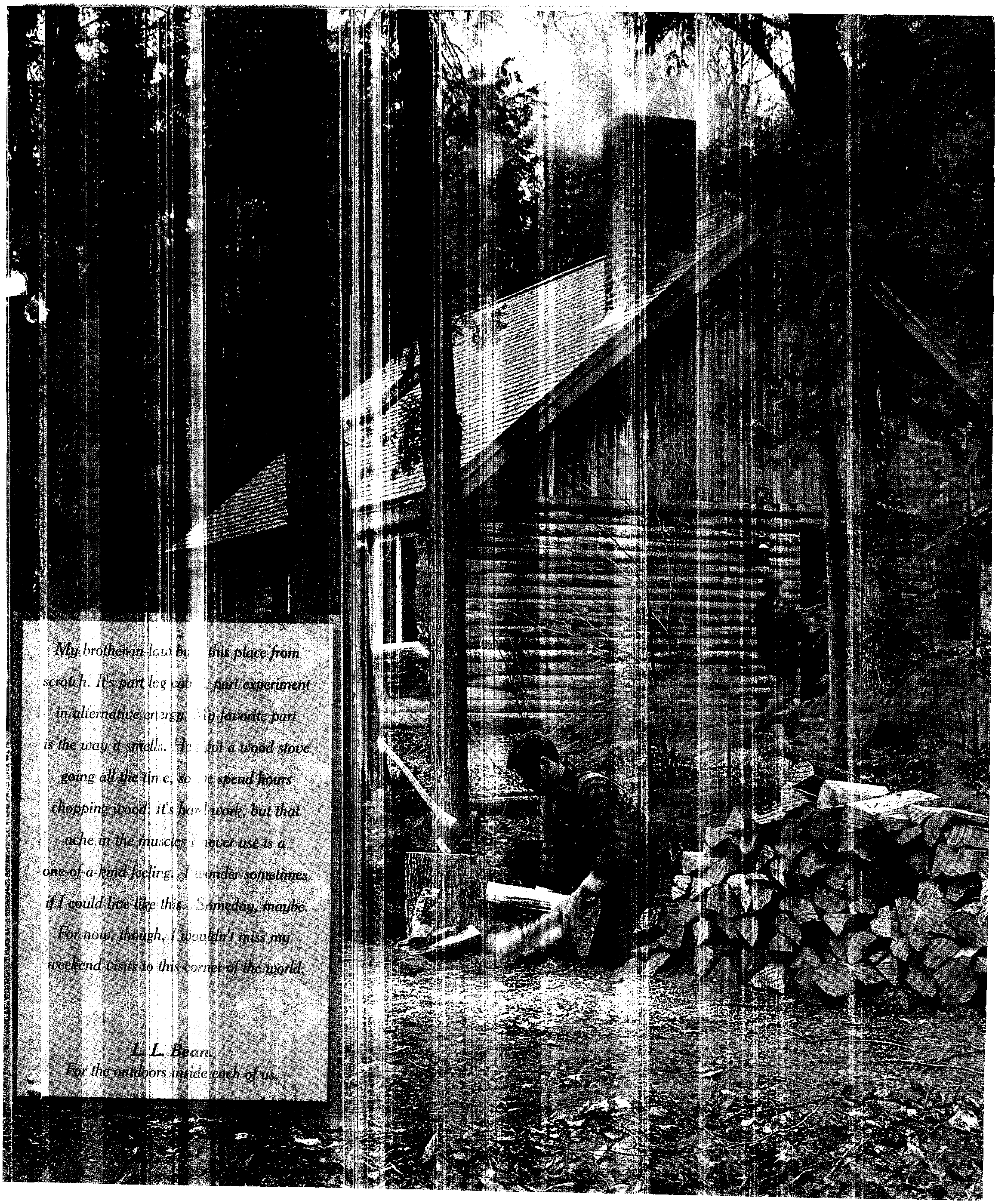
Verdehr Trio—The violin-clarinet-piano trio plays music by Menotti, Schuller, Tomás Marco, William Averitt, and Ge Gan-Ru. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 10 at 8.)

Nicholas Goluses—Classical guitarist, performing Bach, Britten, de Falla, and others. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 10 at 8.)

Australian String Quartet—In their first U.S. tour, playing Haydn, Beethoven, and Ravel. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. Nov. 11 at 2. For information about tickets, call 741-5689.)

Mozartean Players—Stanley Ritchie (violin), Myron Lutzke (cello), and Steven Lubin (fortepiano) play trios by Mozart. Presented by Music Before 1800. (Corpus Christi Church, W. 121st St., just east of Broadway. 666-0675. Nov. 11 at 4.)

An Die Musik—Playing chamber music by Mozart (including the Oboe Quartet and E-Flat Piano Quartet), as well as a quintet arrange-



My brother-in-law built this place from scratch. It's part log cabin, part experiment in alternative energy. My favorite part is the way it smells. He's got a wood stove going all the time, so we spend hours chopping wood. It's hard work, but that ache in the muscles I never use is a one-of-a-kind feeling. I wonder sometimes if I could live like this. Someday, maybe. For now, though, I wouldn't miss my weekend visits to this corner of the world.

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MUSIC—Cont'd

ment of the "Gran Partita" made by C. G. F. Schwencke during Mozart's lifetime. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 11 at 4.)

Young Uck Kim and Christoph Eschenbach—The violinist and pianist perform Mozart sonatas. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 11 at 7:30.)

Goliard Concerts—Chamber music by Respighi, Stravinsky, and Saint-Saëns, plus a Schubert Mass (with Patricia Handy directing the Goliard Chorale). (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 11 at 7:30.)

Bruce Brubaker—Piano, performing music by Haydn, Brahms, and Mark-Anthony Turnage, as well as the Sonata (1926) by Edward Steuermann, who not only premièred Berg's Piano Sonata and every one of Schoenberg's piano works but also was an active composer in his own right. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 12 at 8.)

Ensemble les Nations—Chamber concertos and trio sonatas by Vivaldi from a group that includes recorder player Marion Verbruggen, violinist John Holloway, and oboist Paul Goodwin. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Nov. 13 at 5:45.)

D'Anna Fortunato and Alan Feinberg—The mezzo-soprano and the pianist are joined by the Orion String Quartet in a concert of music by Ives, MacDowell, Loeffler, Amy Beach, and Arthur Farwell. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Nov. 13 at 8.)

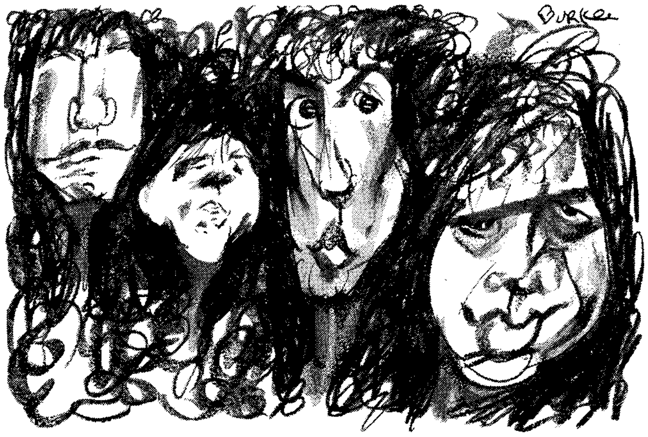
Lark String Quartet—Playing music by Beethoven, Debussy, and Aaron Jay Kernis. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 13 at 8.)

Dawn Kotoski—Soprano, with pianist Warren Jones, performing songs and arias by Mozart, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Foster, and Poulenc, along with three songs by Richard Hundley, including the première of "Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son" (with words from Mother Goose), a lengthy opus with flute obbligato played here by Eugenia Zukerman. Presented by Young Concert Artists. (92nd Street Y. Nov. 13 at 8.)

Speculum Musicae—The contemporary-music group plays pieces by Milton Babbitt, Robert Ceely, Ezequiel Viñao, and Poul Ruder. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 13 at 8.)

Frank Almond and Andreas Haefliger—The violinist and pianist perform Mozart, Brahms, and Ravel. (Bösendorfer Center, 406 E. 79th St. Nov. 13 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Carlos Prieto—Cello, playing Bach and, with pianist Doris Stevenson, music by Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Manuel Ponce, Manuel Enríquez, Alberto Ginastera, and others. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 14 at 8.)



Kiss at Madison Square Garden

JAZZ / POP / ROCK PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Kiss—These trailblazers of lite-metal music gave up the makeup and the tongue extensions several years ago, but a constant flow of product maintains their status somewhere between superstardom and a small industry. (They've sold about seventy million records, and almost all of their twenty-three albums are still in print.) Their stylistic progeny—Mötley Crüe, Ratt, Poison, and dozens of others—are all over MTV and the Top 200. Kiss practically wrote the book on special-effects clichés, and this seventy-city tour features rampways, fog curtains, trusswork, and a gigantic talking Sphinx. "There's a terrific laser show," says the band's leader, Gene Simmons, "and bombs, obviously." And two and a half hours (no intermission) of those unforgettable songs: "Love Gun," "Lick It Up," "Read My Body," and on and on. (Madison Square Garden. 563-8300. Nov. 9 at 7:30.)

Iggy Pop—In 1973, while the New York Dolls were releasing their eponymous classic and Lou Reed his grim, leather epic "Berlin," Iggy and the Stooges delivered the album that would become the blueprint for a generation of slam-dancing, head-banging musicians: "Raw Power," produced by David Bowie, showcased the Ig Man and his Stooges at the peak of their form. Their performances were scary and unforgettable—in the midst of a complete musical breakdown, Iggy would throw his shirtless, and sometimes trouserless, body on scattered broken beer bottles that littered the stage. In the late seventies and eighties, he recorded a series of solo albums, each better than its predecessor. This year, he has released his finest post-Stooges album, "Brick by Brick," and, in concert, he is madly singing and dancing to songs like "Butt Town," a triumph of tough, take-no-prisoners rock and roll. (Academy Theatre, 234 W. 43rd St. 947-5850. Nov. 9-10 at 9.)

Cocteau Twins—The Cocteau Twins (a Scottish trio, actually: Robin Guthrie and Simon Raymonde on guitars and synthesizers; Elizabeth Fraser on vocals) write shimmery pop tunes built on tinsel-thin melodies that are dreamy and exquisite. What makes their music distinctive is Fraser's voice—her pitch rises faster than Kate Bush's—and although she's lyrically unintelligible (she sounds as if she were singing in a foreign language), the tunes are hummable just the same. Their latest imaginary-landscape record, "Heaven or Las Vegas," is the closest they've come to mainstream pop, even if the best track is titled "Frou-Frou Foxes in Midsummer Fires." Their shows can be breathtaking. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Nov. 13 at 7:30.)

Santana—After years of being treated like an embarrassing holdover from the Dionysian sixties, Carlos Santana is almost hip again—"world music," psychedelia, and the San Francisco sound are in vogue. So go ahead, play that air guitar with the rest of the crowd. (Beacon Theatre. Nov. 5-7 at 8.)

Peter Allen—Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 6-8 at 8.

Tito Puente and His Latin Jazz All-Stars—Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Nov. 8 at 8.

"Highlights in Jazz"—Presenting Louie Bellson and his big band. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. Nov. 8 at 8.)

Michael Hedges—Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Nov. 9 at 8.

Sweet Honey in the Rock—Avery Fisher Hall. 874-2424. Nov. 9 at 8.

Larry Ridley and the Jazz Legacy Ensemble—Playing music by Thelonious Monk and Oliver Nelson. (Pace Downtown Theatre. Nov. 11 at 3.)

AC/DC—Meadowlands Arena. 1-201 935-3900. Nov. 11 at 8.

"Grassroots Gospel Festival"—Two concerts. Nov. 10 at 8: The Dixie Hummingbirds and Lee Cloud & the Original Northernaires. . . . ¶ Nov. 11 at 3: Marion Williams, and the Gospel Pearls. (Triplex, 199 Chambers St. 618-1980.)

"Folk Masters: Traditional Music in the Americas"—A five-week series. Nov. 6 at 8: Eddie Lejeune and the Morse Playboys, Irene Berthiaume & Noella Marquis, Arcade Richard, and the Maine French Fiddlers. . . . ¶ Nov. 10 at 8:30: Iván Cuesta y Sus Vallenatos Auténticos and Los Pleneros de la 21. . . . ¶ Nov. 13 at 8: The Badgett Sisters, Brother Theotis Taylor, and the McCollough Sons of Thunder Brass Band. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Performances run through Dec. 15.)

Benefit Concert—With Ray Charles, B. B. King, and the Philip Morris Superband. (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 864-0372. Nov. 10 at 8.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Giants—*Away until Nov. 18, when they face the Detroit Lions.*

Jets—Vs. the Miami Dolphins, Nov. 11 at 1.

Rangers—Vs. the Boston Bruins, Nov. 5. . . . ¶ Vs. the Buffalo Sabres, Nov. 7. . . . ¶ Vs. the Calgary Flames, Nov. 11. (Game time, 7:30.)

Islanders—Vs. the Toronto Maple Leafs, Nov. 6. . . . ¶ Vs. the Calgary Flames, Nov. 10. (Game time, 7:35.)

Devils—Vs. the Islanders, Nov. 7. . . . ¶ Vs. the Rangers, Nov. 9. . . . ¶ Vs. the Montreal Canadiens, Nov. 13. (Game time, 7:45.)

Knicks—Vs. the Dallas Mavericks, Nov. 6. . . . ¶ Vs. the Washington Bullets, Nov. 8. (Game time, 7:30.)

Nets—Vs. the Miami Heat, Nov. 8. . . . ¶ Vs. the Boston Celtics, Nov. 10. . . . ¶ Vs. t[illegible] Washington Bullets, Nov. 12. . . . ¶ Vs. the Milwaukee Bucks, Nov. 14. (Game time, 7:30.)

(The Jets play at Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands; for information about tickets, call 421-6600. The Rangers and the Knicks play at Madison Square Garden, 563-8300; the Islanders at the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300; and the Devils and the Nets at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

RACING

Horses—At Aqueduct: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 12:30. . . . At the Meadowlands: Weeknights at 7:30. . . . **trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8, and Tuesdays at 1.

CHAMPIONSHIP—TENNIS

Virginia Slims Tournament—Graf, Navratilova, and fourteen other top-seeded women battle for the title in Madison Square Garden. The matches start on Nov. 12 at 5 and finish with the finals, Nov. 18 at 1. For information about tickets, call 465-6500.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

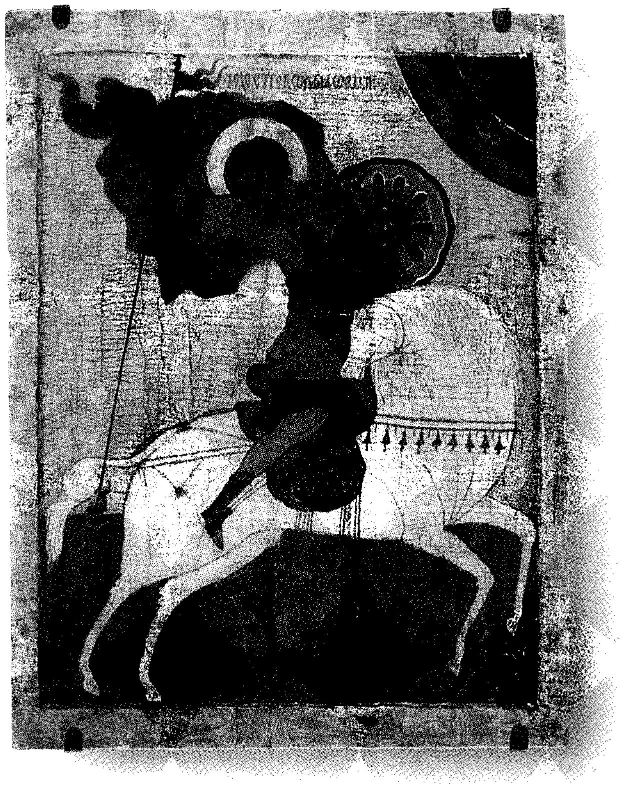
Cartoons—What more perfect site than Fraunces Tavern—a hangout of early government figures, and situated in the heart of Wall Street—for an exhibition of cartoons aimed at skulduggery in the political and financial worlds? Among the sixty works on display, dating from 1813 to 1988, is a luminous study called "The Deadly Upas Tree of Wall Street" by Joseph Keppler (1838-94), which pretty much says it all: beneath a gold-coin-leafed tree, with the White House and the Potomac in the background, is a heap of bodies (well-known characters of the day) poisoned by tainted money. It's a painful reminder that the corrupting power of greed is constant. As Christine Scriabine, curator of the show, said, "You could just change the faces and you'd still be in business." (54 Pearl St. 425-1778. Open Mondays through Fridays, 10 to 4.)

Bike 'n' Snack—The last tour of the Hungry Pedalers' season goes to Harlem, where the fare includes historic mansions and a spicy West Indian lunch. (Meets at the Maine Monument in Columbus Circle. Nov. 10 at 8:45 A.M. For more information and reservations, call 989-8851.)

Readings—Nov. 6 at 8:30: James Merrill, and J. D. McClatchy read from their own poetry. (Tishman Auditorium, New York University, 40 Washington Sq. S. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Nov. 12 at 8: Kathryn Walker, Paul Schmidt, and James Maraniss read from the works of Sor Juana Iñes de la Cruz, a seventeenth-century Mexican nun. (Manha[illegible]n Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 5[illegible]h St. 645-5848.) . . . ¶ Nov. 12 at 8: Maya Angelou, Tom Wolfe, Garrison Keillor, and Laurie Colwin read from their own works in a benefit. Calvin Trillin hosts the evening. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) . . . ¶ Nov. 13 at 8: David Leavitt reads from his new collection of stories, in a benefit. (Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 W. 13th St. Admission by contribution.)

Talks—Sharon Olds, Jane Cooper, and Galway Kinnell on the work of Muriel Rukeyser. (Poets House, 351 W. 18th St. Nov. 7 at 7. Tickets at the door on the night of the talk.) . . . ¶ Felix Rohatyn on the future of New York. (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. Nov. 13 at 6. For information about tickets, call 930-0855.)

Memorandum—Veterans Day will be observed Nov. 12.



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This icon from the late 1400s–early 1500s depicts the classic triumph of good over evil. It is just one example from the Moscow: Treasures & Traditions® exhibition opening in Washington, D.C. this November. In it are 250 pieces, representing 500 years of Russian art and culture, never before seen outside of the U.S.S.R. Along with stunning paintings, you'll discover icons, sculpture, a rich assortment of porcelain, weapons, medals and costumes. You can see the Moscow: Treasures & Traditions® exhibition from November 16 through February 3 at the Smithsonian's International Gallery, 1100 Jefferson Drive S.W. on the National Mall. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., 7 days a week, except December 25. Don't miss this unique opportunity.

BOEING

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 34.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: “To Sleep with Anger” (†).
Theatre 2: “Metropolitan” (directed by Whit Stillman), with Edward Clements, Carolyn Farina, Christopher Eigeman, and Taylor Nichols.
Theatre 3: “Akira Kurosawa’s Dreams” (†).
Theatre 4: “Leningrad Cowboys Go America” (Aki Kaurismaki; in English and Finnish).
Theatre 5: “C’est la Vie” (Diane Kurys), with Nathalie Baye and Richard Berry.
Theatre 6: “Tune in Tomorrow . . .” (Jon Amiel), with Barbara Hershey, Keanu Reeves, and Peter Falk.

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Through Nov. 8: “Route One” (Robert Kramer).
From Nov. 9: “The Nun” (“La Religieuse”; 1965, Jacques Rivette; in French), with Anna Karina.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: “Miller’s Crossing” (†).
Theatre 2: “Avalon” (†).
Theatre 3: “GoodFellas” (†).

Loews 19th Street East 6, B’way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: “GoodFellas” (†).
Theatre 2: Through Nov. 8: “Graveyard Shift” (Ralph S. Singleton), with David Andrews, Kelly Wolf, Stephen Macht, and Brad Dourif. From Nov. 9: “Dances with Wolves” (Kevin Costner), with Costner.
Theatre 3: “Avalon” (†).
Theatre 4: “Reversal of Fortune” (Barbet Schroeder), with Glenn Close, Jeremy Irons, and Ron Silver.
Theatre 5: “Jacob’s Ladder” (Adrian Lyne), with Tim Robbins, Elizabeth Peña, and Danny Aiello.
Theatre 6: “Ghost” (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
“Fantasia” (†).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
“Sibling Rivalry” (Carl Reiner), with Kirstie Alley.

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: “Graveyard Shift” (Ralph S. Singleton), with David Andrews, Kelly Wolf, Stephen Macht, and Brad Dourif.
Theatre 2: “Waiting for the Light” (Christopher Monger), with Shirley MacLaine, Teri Garr, Clancy Brown, Vincent Schiavelli, and John Bedford Lloyd.
Theatre 3: “Graffiti Bridge” (Prince), with Prince.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
“White Palace” (Luis Mandoki), with Susan Sarandon and James Spader.

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
“Roger Corman’s Frankenstein Unbound” (Corman), with John Hurt, Raul Julia, Bridget Fonda, and Jason Patric.

Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: “Fantasia” (†).
Theatre 2: “Tune in Tomorrow . . .” (Jon Amiel), with Barbara Hershey, Keanu Reeves, and Peter Falk.

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
“Pacific Heights” (†).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
“Waiting for the Light” (Christopher Monger), with Shirley MacLaine, Teri Garr, Clancy Brown, and Vincent Schiavelli.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: “Marked for Death” (Dwight H. Little), with Steven Seagal, Joanna Pacula, and Keith David.
Theatre 2: “Ghost” (†).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
“Sibling Rivalry” (Carl Reiner), with Kirstie Alley.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: “Henry & June” (†).
Theatre 2: “Miller’s Crossing” (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: “GoodFellas” (†).
Theatre 2: “Graffiti Bridge” (Prince), with Prince.
Theatre 3: “Listen Up: The Lives of Quincy Jones” (Ellen Weissbrod), a documentary.

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: “Avalon” (†).
Theatre 2: “Jacob’s Ladder” (Adrian Lyne), with Tim Robbins, Elizabeth Peña, and Danny Aiello.

Kevin Costner in “Dances with Wolves”

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
Through Nov. 8: “Postcards from the Edge” (†).
From Nov. 9: “The Krays” (Peter Medak), with Billie Whitelaw, Tom Bell, Gary Kemp, and Martin Kemp.

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: “Graveyard Shift” (Ralph S. Singleton), with David Andrews, Kelly Wolf, Stephen Macht, and Brad Dourif.
Theatre 2: “Memphis Belle” (Michael Caton-Jones), with Matthew Modine and Eric Stoltz.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
“Reversal of Fortune” (Barbet Schroeder), with Glenn Close, Jeremy Irons, and Ron Silver.

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
Through Nov. 8: Theatre closed.
From Nov. 9: “Dances with Wolves” (Kevin Costner), with Costner.

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
“Graveyard Shift” (Ralph S. Singleton), with David Andrews, Kelly Wolf, Stephen Macht, and Brad Dourif.

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: “Marked for Death” (Dwight H. Little), with Steven Seagal, Joanna Pacula, and Keith David.
Theatre 2: “Night of the Living Dead” (Tom Savini), with Patricia Tallman and Tony Todd.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: “GoodFellas” (†).
Theatre 2: “Graffiti Bridge” (Prince), with Prince.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 6: “Tong Tana: A Journey to the Heart of Borneo” (directed by Jan Roed, Fredrik Von Krusenstjerna, Bjorn Cederberg, and Kristian Petri; in German, English, Swedish, and Penan), a documentary. From Nov. 7: “Baxter” (1988, Jerome Boivin; in French), with Lise Delamare.
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: “Akira” (Katsuhiro Otomo), a Japanese animated science-fiction film.

Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: “White Palace” (Luis Mandoki), with Susan Sarandon and James Spader.
Theatre 2: “Graveyard Shift” (Ralph S. Singleton), with David Andrews, Kelly Wolf, Stephen Macht, and Brad Dourif.

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
“Reversal of Fortune” (Barbet Schroeder), with Glenn Close, Jeremy Irons, and Ron Silver.

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: “Henry & June” (†).
Theatre 2: Through Nov. 8: “Sibling Rivalry” (Carl Reiner), with Kirstie Alley. From Nov. 9: “The Krays” (Peter Medak), with Billie Whitelaw, Tom Bell, Gary Kemp, and Martin Kemp.

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: “Graffiti Bridge” (Prince), with Prince.
Theatre 2: “The Icicle Thief” (Maurizio Nichetti; in Italian).
Theatre 3: “Cinema Paradiso” (Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian), with Philippe Noiret and Salvatore Cascio.
Theatre 4: “Jacob’s Ladder” (Adrian Lyne), with Tim Robbins, Elizabeth Peña, and Danny Aiello.

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: “Pacific Heights” (†).
Theatre 2: “Henry & June” (†).
Theatre 3: “Miller’s Crossing” (†).
Theatre 4: “Postcards from the Edge” (†).
Theatre 5: “Sibling Rivalry” (Carl Reiner), with Kirstie Alley.
Theatre 6: “White Palace” (Luis Mandoki), with Susan Sarandon and James Spader.
Theatre 7: “Waiting for the Light” (Christopher Monger), with Shirley MacLaine and Teri Garr.
Theatre 8: “Tune in Tomorrow . . .” (Jon Amiel), with Barbara Hershey, Keanu Reeves, and Peter Falk.
Theatre 9: Through Nov. 8: “Memphis Belle” (Michael Caton-Jones), with Matthew Modine and Eric Stoltz. From Nov. 9: “The Krays” (Peter Medak), with Billie Whitelaw, Tom Bell, Gary Kemp, and Martin Kemp.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: “Marked for Death” (Dwight H. Little), with Steven Seagal, Joanna Pacula, and Keith David.
Theatre 2: “Graffiti Bridge” (Prince), with Prince.
Theatre 3: “Roger Corman’s Frankenstein Unbound” (Corman), with John Hurt, Raul Julia, Bridget Fonda, and Jason Patric.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
“Fantasia” (†).

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: “Henry & June” (†).
Theatre 2: “Metropolitan” (Whit Stillman), with Edward Clements, Carolyn Farina, Christopher Eigeman, and Taylor Nichols.
Theatre 3: “Marked for Death” (Dwight H. Little), with Steven Seagal, Joanna Pacula, and Keith David.
Theatre 4: “Avalon” (†).
Theatre 5: “Waiting for the Light” (Christopher Monger), with Shirley MacLaine and Teri Garr.
Theatre 6: “Sibling Rivalry” (Carl Reiner), with Kirstie Alley.

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
“White Palace” (Luis Mandoki), with Susan Sarandon and James Spader.

Loews Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
“Metropolitan” (Whit Stillman), with Edward Clements, Carolyn Farina, Christopher Eigeman, and Taylor Nichols.

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
“Reversal of Fortune” (Barbet Schroeder), with Glenn Close, Jeremy Irons, and Ron Silver.

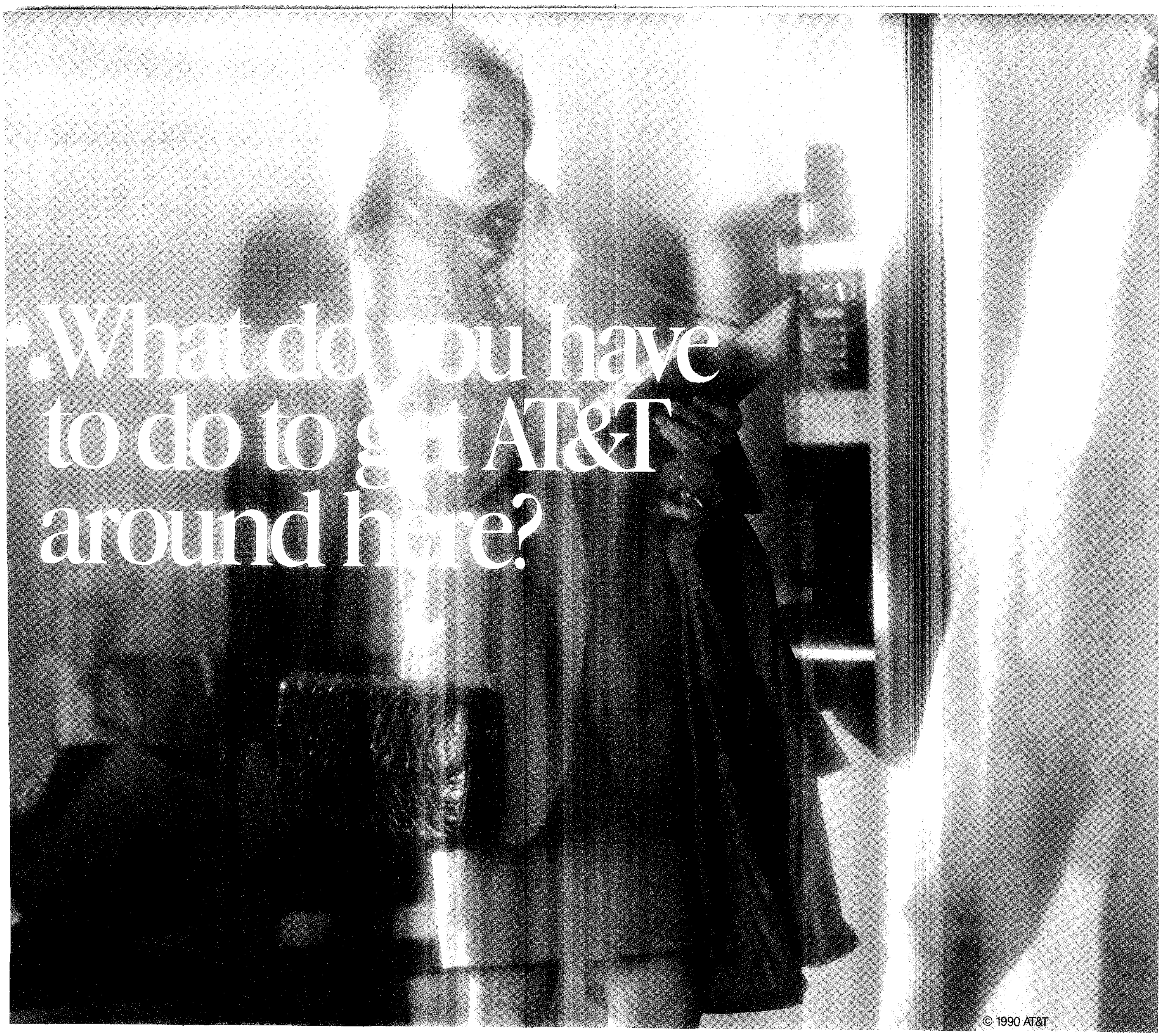
Carnegie Hall Cinema, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
“C’est la Vie” (Diane Kurys), with Nathalie Baye and Richard Berry.

Carnegie Screening Room, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (757-2131)
“Miller’s Crossing” (†).

Loews Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
“Vincent & Theo” (Robert Altman), with Tim Roth and Paul Rhys.

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
“Presumed Innocent” (†).

Loews Paramount, B’way at 61st. (247-5070)
Through Nov. 8: “Tune in Tomorrow . . .” (Jon Amiel), with Barbara Hershey, Keanu Reeves, and Peter Falk.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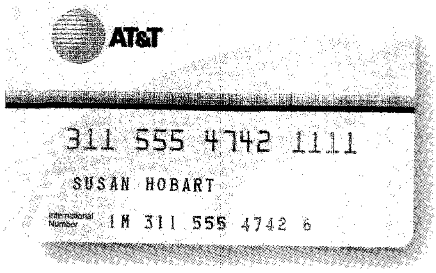
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NINETY EIGHT
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Watching "Sunrise" (playing November 13 at the Donnell Library Center) is a dreamy yet immediate experience, digging under your consciousness the way lesser movies just get under your skin. It's easy to see why F. W. Murnau's silent classic of marital betrayal and redemption put off audiences and critics alike when it premièred in 1927. As the Woman from the City (Margaret Livingston) tries to get the Man (George O'Brien) to drown the Wife (Janet Gaynor), you may recoil from the bald contrasts, and from the vision that later emerges of the husband's role as protector and provider. But Murnau brings unexpected potency to every element of his fable—even to the obvious juxtapositions of the city and the country. Murnau and screenwriter Carl Mayer subtitled their movie "a song of two humans." Actually, it's the song of one human, the Man, because both women are seen from his point of view. What distinguishes the movie is how completely Murnau fleshes out this male-centered vision—how superbly he makes his archetypal characters breathe.

If the city were presented as a sinkhole of iniquity, the movie might have been too simple. But it's a place of liberation as well as corruption, right from the moment when the panicked wife boards a streetcar to flee from her repentant husband. The circular flow of "Sunrise" recalls both the cycle of nature and the dizzying swirl of aerialists and carnival rides. In this movie, life spins like the earth—and like a roulette wheel, too.

Murnau catches the sparkle in Gaynor's childlike emotions. And without too much fuss O'Brien conveys the Man's uncomplicated feelings, from helpless lust to stalwart devotion. Under Murnau's direction, he's truly the Man's man.

From Nov. 9: "Dances with Wolves" (Kevin Costner), with Costner.

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"Sibling Rivalry" (Carl Reiner), with Kirstie Alley.

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "The Nasty Girl" (Michael Verhoeven; in German), with Lena Stolze.
Theatre 2: "Cinema Paradiso" (Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian).
Theatre 3: "L'Atalante" (†).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Postcards from the Edge" (†).

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Jacob's Ladder" (Adrian Lyne), with Tim Robbins, Elizabeth Peña, and Danny Aiello.
Theatre 2: Through Nov. 8: "Graveyard Shift" (Ralph S. Singleton), with David Andrews, Kelly Wolf, Stephen Macht, and Brad Dourif. From Nov. 9: "The Krays" (Peter Medak), with Billie Whitelaw, Tom Bell, Gary Kemp, and Martin Kemp.
Theatre 3: "Fantasia" (†).
Theatre 4: "Reversal of Fortune" (Barbet Schroeder), with Glenn Close, Jeremy Irons, and Ron Silver.
Theatre 5: "GoodFellas" (†).
Theatre 6: "Avalon" (†).

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Henry & June" (†).
Theatre 2: "White Palace" (Luis Mandoki), with Susan Sarandon and James Spader.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "Graffiti Bridge" (Prince), with Prince.
Theatre 2: "Marked for Death" (Dwight H. Little), with Steven Seagal, Joanna Pacula, and Keith David.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (356-0900)
Theatre 1: "GoodFellas" (†).
Theatre 2: "Roger Corman's Frankenstein Unbound" (directed by Corman), with John Hurt, Raul Julia, Bridget Fonda, and Jason Patric.
Theatre 3: "King of New York" (Abel Ferrara), with Christopher Walken, David Caruso, Larry Fishburne, and Wesley Snipes.
Theatre 4: "Jacob's Ladder" (Adrian Lyne), with Tim Robbins, Elizabeth Peña, and Danny Aiello.
Theatre 5: "Listen Up: The Lives of Quincy Jones" (Ellen Weissbrod), a documentary.
Theatre 6: "Pacific Heights" (†).

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"Mr. Destiny" (James Orr), with James Belushi and Michael Caine.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: "The Hot Spot" (Dennis Hopper), with Don Johnson, Virginia Madsen, Jennifer Connelly, and Charles Martin Smith.
Theatre 2: "Death Warrant" (Deran Saradian), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.
Theatre 3: "Ghost" (†).

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"Graveyard Shift" (Ralph S. Singleton), with David Andrews, Kelly Wolf, Stephen Macht, and Brad Dourif.

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: "Marked for Death" (Dwight H. Little), with Steven Seagal, Joanna Pacula, and Keith David.
Theatre 2: "Night of the Living Dead" (Tom Savini), with Patricia Tallman and Tony Todd.

West Side Cinema 1 and 2, 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)
Theatre 1: "Graffiti Bridge" (Prince), with Prince.
Theatre 2: "Graffiti Bridge."

REVIVAL HOUSES

Biograph Cinema, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)
Nov. 5: "Bitter Sweet" (1940, directed by W. S. Van Dyke), with Jeanette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy, and George Sanders; and "It's a Date" (1940, William A. Seiter), with Deanna Durbin, Walter Pidgeon, Kay Francis, and S. Z. Sakall.
Nov. 6-7: "Flowing Gold" (1940, Alfred E. Green), with John Garfield, Frances Farmer, and Pat O'Brien; and "They Drive by Night" (1940, Raoul Walsh), with Ann Sheridan, George Raft, Ida Lupino, and Humphrey Bogart.
Nov. 8-10: "The Mortal Storm" (1940, Frank Borzage), with Margaret Sullavan, James Stewart, Frank Morgan, Robert Young, Irene Rich, and Maria Ouspenskaya; and "Foreign Correspondent" (†).
Nov. 11-12: "Susan and God" (†) and "Escape" (†).
Nov. 13-14: "Castle on the Hudson" (1940, Anatole Litvak), with John Garfield, Ann Sheridan, Pat O'Brien, and Burgess Meredith; and "Johnny Apollo" (1940, Henry Hathaway), with Tyrone Power, Dorothy Lamour, Edward Arnold, and Lloyd Nolan.

Cinema Village (formerly the Bijou Cinema), 3rd Ave. between 12th and 13th. (505-7320)
Through Nov. 6: "Camille Claudel" (1989, Bruno Nuytten; in French), with Isabelle Adjani.
Nov. 7-10: "The Music Teacher" (1989, Gérard Corbiau; in French); and "La Lectrice" (1989, Michel Deville; in French), with Miou-Miou.
Nov. 11-13: "Ran" (1985, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese), with Mieko Harada, Tatsuya Nakadai, Peter, and Hisashi Ikawa.
From Nov. 14: "Murmur of the Heart" (1971, Louis Malle; in French), with Léa Massari, Benoit Ferreux, Daniel Gélin, and Michel Londsale; and "Au Revoir les Enfants" (†).

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Nov. 5: "The She-Creature" (1957, Edward L. Cahn), with Chester Morris, Marla English, and Tom Conway; "The Saga of the Viking Women" (1957, Roger Corman), with Abby Dalton, Susan Cabot, and Jonathan Haze; and "The Wasp Woman" (1959, Corman), with Cabot and Anthony Eisley.
Nov. 6: "A Bucket of Blood" (1959, Roger Corman), with Dick Miller; "Attack of the Giant Leeches" (1959, Bernard Kowalski), with Yvette Vickers and Ken Clark; and "Invasion of the Saucer-Men" (1957, Edward L. Cahn), with Steve Terrell, Gloria Castillo, and Frank Gorshin.
Nov. 7-8: "The Amazing Colossal Man" (1957, Bert I. Gordon), with Glenn Langan, Cathy Downs, and William Hudson; and "War of the Colossal Beast" (1958, Gordon), with Sally Fraser, Roger Pace, and Dean Parkin.
Nov. 9-10: "The Cool and the Crazy" (1958, William Witney), with Scott Marlowe, Gigi Perreau, Richard Bakalyan, and Dick Jones; and "Sorority Girl" (1957, Rog[illegible] Corman), with Susan Cabot, Barbou[illegible] Morris, June Kenney, and Dick Miller.
Nov. 11-12: "Rock All Night" (1957, Roger Corman), with Dick Miller, Abby Dalton, Russell Johnson, and Jonathan Haze; and "Shake, Rattle, and Rock" (1956, Edward L. Cahn), with Michael Connors, Sterling Holloway, Lisa Gay, and Fats Domino.
Nov. 13: "The Gunslinger" (1956, Roger Corman), with John Ireland, Beverly Garland, and Allison Hayes; "Apache Woman" (1955, Corman), with Lloyd Bridges, Joan Taylor, and Lance Fuller; and "The Oklahoma Woman" (1955, Corman), with Richard Denning, Peggie Castle, Cathy Downs, Michael Connors, Jonathan Haze, and Dick Miller.
From Nov. 14: "Dragstrip Girl" (1957, Edward L. Cahn), with John Ashley, Steve Terrell, Fay Spain, and Frank Gorshin; "Motorcycle Gang" (1957, Cahn), with Terrell, Ann Neyland, Ashley, and Carl Switzer; and "Female Jungle" (1955, Bruno Ve Sota), with Jayne Mansfield, Lawrence Tierney, John Carradine, Kathleen Crowley, and Ve Sota.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Nov. 5: "La Cage aux Folles" (1979, Edouard Molinaro; in French) and "La Cage aux Folles II" (1980, Molinaro; in French), both with Ugo Tognazzi and Michel Serrault.
Nov. 6: "Pandora's Box" (1928, G. W. Pabst; a German silent film), with Louise Brooks and Fritz Kortner; and "Diary of a Lost Girl" (1929, Pabst; a German silent film), with Brooks and Fritz Rasp.
Nov. 7: "My Favorite Wife" (1940, Garson Kanin), with Irene Dunne, Cary Grant, Gail Patrick, and Randolph Scott; and "Unfaithfully Yours" (1948, Preston Sturges), with Rex Harrison, Linda Darnell, Edgar Kennedy, and Rudy Vallée.
Nov. 8: "Written on the Wind" (†) and "The Tarnished Angels" (†).
Nov. 9-10: "Octopussy" (†) and "The Man with the Golden Gun" (†).
Nov. 11: "Foreign Correspondent" (†) and "Saboteur" (†).
Nov. 12: "The Threepenny Opera" (1931, G. W. Pabst; in German), with Lotte Lenya; and "The Blue Angel" (†).
Nov. 13: "Gothic" (1987, Ken Russell), with Gabriel Byrne, Julian Sands, Natasha Richardson, and Miriam Cyr; and "The Devils" (1971, Russell), with Vanessa Redgrave and Oliver Reed.
Nov. 14: "Libeled Lady" (1936, Jack Conway), with Jean Harlow, William Powell, Myrna Loy, and Spencer Tracy; and "Love Crazy" (1941, Conway), with Powell, Myrna Loy, Gail Patrick, Jack Carson, and Florence Bates.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—Nov. 5 at 2:30: "Five" (1951, directed by Arch Oboler), with William Phipps and Susan Douglas. . . . ¶ Nov. 5 at 3: "Sons, Mother, and a General" (1955, Laslo Benedek; in German). . . . ¶ Nov. 5 at 6: "Decalogue 6" (1988, Krzysztof Kieslowski; in Polish). . . . ¶ Nov. 5 at 6:30: A program of animated films by Emily Hubley and Stacey Steers, who will be present. . . . ¶ Nov. 6 at 3 and 6: A program of three short animated films by Tom Yasumi and six short animated films by Joanna Priestley. . . . ¶ Nov. 8 at 2:30: "La Jetée" (1963, Chris Marker; in French), with Hélène Chatelain, Davos Hanich, and Jacques Ledoux; and "The War Games" (1967, Peter Watkins). . . . ¶ Nov. 8 at 3 and

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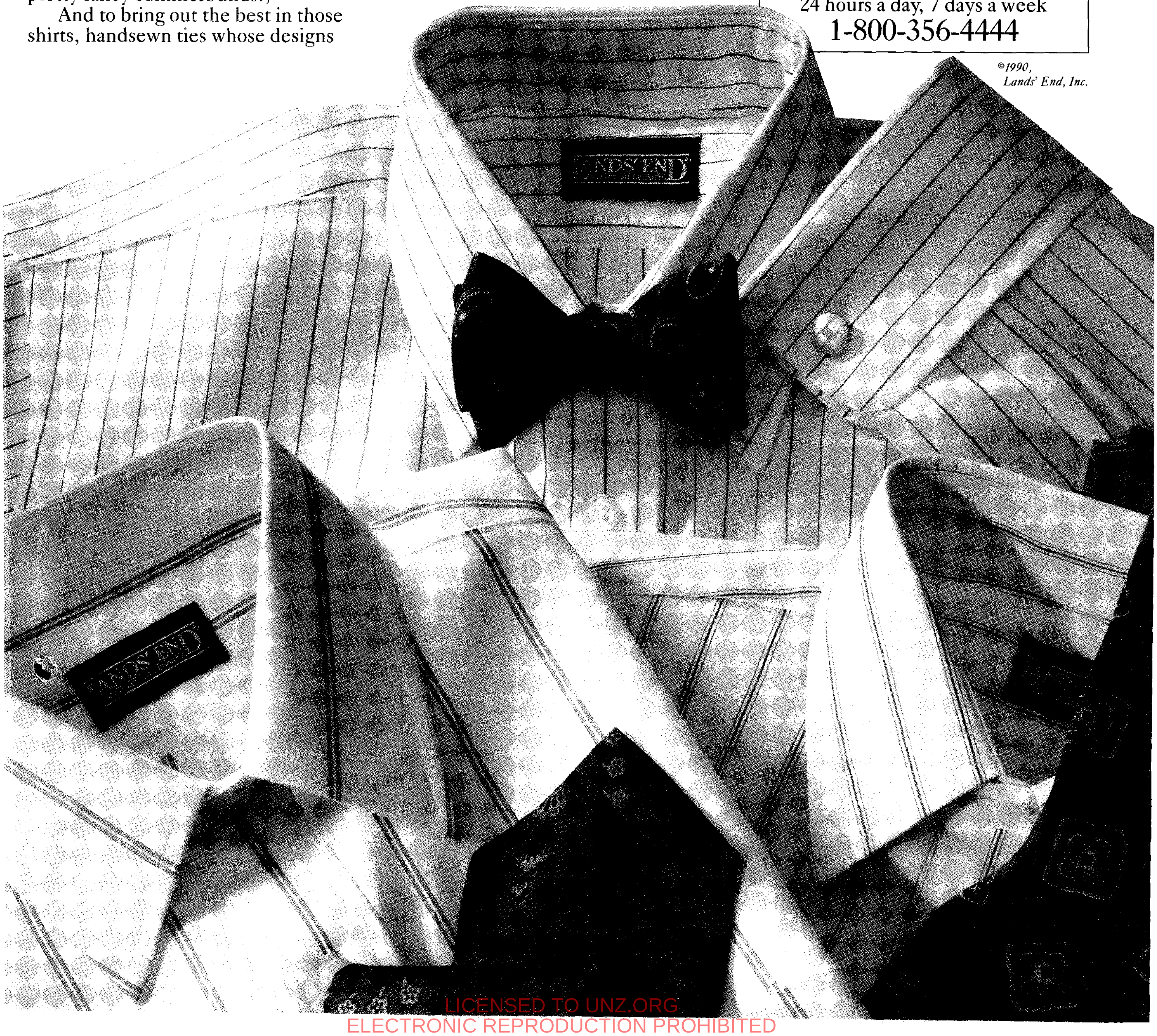


6: "Trouble Behind" (1990, Robby Henson), a documentary.... ¶ Nov. 8 at 6: "Decalogue 7" (1988, Krzysztof Kieslowski; in Polish).... ¶ Nov. 9 at 2:30: "Crossroads" (1975, Bruce Conner); and "Dr. Strangelove" (1964, Stanley Kubrick), with Peter Sellers, George C. Scott, and Sterling Hayden.... ¶ Nov. 9 at 3 and 6: Eight Betty Boop cartoons, produced by Max Fleischer and directed by Dave Fleischer.... ¶ Nov. 9 at 6: "Decalogue 8" (1988, Krzysztof Kieslowski; in Polish).... ¶ Nov. 10 at 2: "Decalogue 9" (1988, Krzysztof Kieslowski; in Polish).... ¶ Nov. 10-11 at 3 and 5: Two different programs of animated films shown at the 1990 Festival of Animation, in Zagreb, Yugoslavia.... ¶ Nov. 10 at 5: "Decalogue 10" (1988, Krzysztof Kieslowski; in Polish).... ¶ Nov. 11 at 11:30: "Decalogue 1-3," a three-hour program.... ¶ Nov. 11 at 2:30: "Decalogue 4-6," a three-hour program.... ¶ Nov. 11 at 6: "Decalogue 7-10," a four-hour program.... ¶ Nov. 13 at 6: "A Short Film About Killing" (1988, Krzysztof Kieslowski; in Polish).

MUSEUM OF BROADCASTING, 1 E. 53rd St. (752-7684)—"MB Playhouse," dramas shown on television over the past thirty years. Nov. 6-10: "Eleanor and Franklin (Part 2)" (1976, ABC), with Jane Alexander and Edward Herrmann.... From Nov. 13: Jean Anouilh's "Antigone" (1974, WNET), with Geneviève Bujold. Showings Tuesdays at 3 and 6, Wednesdays through Fridays at 3, and Saturdays at 1.... ¶ Programs about contemporary comedians, and people who influenced them. Dennis Miller: Nov. 6-7: "Mr. Miller Goes to Washington" (1988, HBO); and the final show of "Chiller Theatre" (1983, WPIX), with host Bill Cardille. Nov. 8-10: Excerpts from Miller's television work, excerpts from Steve Allen's television work, and excerpts from Johnny Carson's television work.... Whoopi Goldberg: Nov. 13-14: "Whoopi Goldberg ... Direct from Broadway" (1985, HBO); and "The Ernie Kovacs Show" (1956, NBC). Showings Tuesdays at 12:15 and 5:30 and Wednesdays through Saturdays at 12:15.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES, 32-34 Second Ave., at Second St. (477-2714)—Films showing in either the Courthouse Theatre or the Maya Deren Theatre. Films by Ulrike Ottinger, all in German: Nov. 5 at 7: "Berlin Fever" (1973) and "Ticket of No Return" (1979). ... Nov. 6 at 7 and Nov. 9 at 9: "Usinimage" (1987) and "Freak Orlando" (1981).... Nov. 7 at 7: "Count Down" (1990).... Nov. 8 at 7 and Nov. 10 at 6:30: "The Image of Dorian Gray in the Yellow Press" (1984).... Nov. 10 at 9 and Nov. 11 at 6: "Johanna D'Arc of Mongolia" (1989).... ¶ Nov. 5-8 at 9:30, Nov. 9 at 7, and Nov. 10-13 at 10:30: "Antigone" (1989, Amy Greenfield), with Bertram Ross, Janet Eilber, and Greenfield. ... ¶ Nov. 8 at 7, Nov. 9-11 at 7 and 9, and Nov. 12-14 at 7: "Man No Run" (1988, Claire Denis).... ¶ Nov. 8 at 9:30: "The Art of Worldly Wisdom" (1979, Bruce Elder). Mr. Elder will be present.... ¶ Nov. 11 at 2: "The Snake Pit" (1948, Anatole Litvak), with Olivia De Havilland.... ¶ Episodes of Robert Altman's television show "Tanner '88," with Michael Murphy in the title role. Nov. 12 at 8:30: Episodes 1 and 2: "Dark Horse" and "For Real." ... Nov. 13 at 8:30: Episodes 3A, 3B, 4A, and 4B: "Moonwalker and Bookbag," "Bagels with Bruce," "Child's Play," and "The Great Escape." ... Nov. 14 at 8:30: Episodes 5A, 5B, 6A, and 6B: "The Girl Friend Factor," "Something Borrowed, Something New," "The Boiler Room," and "The Reality Check." ... ¶ Nov. 14 at 6:30: "Signed: Lino Brocka" (1988, Christian Blackwood), a documentary.... ¶ Nov. 14 at 8:30: "Manila in the Claws of Neon" (1975, Lino Brocka).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160) —Nov. 7 at 12:30 and 6: "Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie" (1988, Marcel Ophuls; in French, German, and Spanish), a four-and-a-half-hour documentary.... ¶ Nov. 14 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Too Beautiful for You" (1989, Bertrand Blier; in French), with Gérard Depardieu, Carole Bouquet, Josiane Balasko, and Roland Blanche.

JAPAN SOCIETY, 333 E. 47th St. (752-3015)—Nov. 9 at 7:30: "Black Rain" (1989, Shohei Imamura; in Japanese), with Yoshiko Tanaka and Kazuo Kitamura.

DONNELL LIBRARY CENTER, 20 W. 53rd St. (621-0619)—Nov. 8 at 6: "Noblesse Oblige" and "Friendly Witness," both directed by Warren Sonbert, who will be present.... ¶ Nov. 13 at noon: "Sunrise" (see blurb on page 32).... ¶ Nov. 13 at 2:30: "Rebellion in Patagonia" (1974, Hector Olivera; in Spanish).

JEWISH MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (860-1894)—Nov. 6 at 7: "Radio Days" (1987, Woody Allen), with Allen, Mia Farrow, Julie Kavner, Tony Roberts, Michael Tucker, and Dianne Wiest.

ASIA SOCIETY, Park Ave. at 70th St. (517-2742) —"Stories of Women: Films by and About Indian Women": Nov. 6 at 7: "Parama" (Aparna Sen).... ¶ Nov. 7 at 7: "Barrister" (Vijaya Mehta).... ¶ Nov. 9 at 7: "It Rested" (Soudhamini).... ¶ Nov. 11 at 5: "Sati" (Sen).... ¶ Nov. 12 at 7: "Smriti Chitre" (Mehta).

WHITNEY MUSEUM, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—Through Nov. 11: "Out of the Corner," a video installation by Adrian Piper.

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, Fifth Ave. at 81st St. (879-5500)—Nov. 10 at 4 and 6:30: "Reed: Insurgent Mexico" (1970, Paul Leduc), a documentary.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—In either the Riklis Theatre or the Warner Communications Screening Room: "Red Scare! Soviet Communism in American Film and Television, 1909-88." Nov. 7-9 at 2: "Communism" (1952), an episode of "The Sacr[illegible] Heart Program"; "Red Documents" (1953), an episode of "I Led 3 Lives," with Richard Carlson; and "The Spy Next Door" (1961), an episode of "U.S. Armstrong Circle Theatre," with Wesley Addy and William Daniels.... ¶ Nov. 10 at 1:30: "Bolshevism on Trial" (1919, Harley Knoles; silent) and "The Voice of the Violin" (1909, D. W. Griffith; silent).... ¶ Nov. 10 at 3: "Reds" (1981, Warren Beatty), with Beatty, Diane Keaton, Edward Herrmann, Jerzy Kosinski, Jack Nicholson, Maureen Stapleton, and Paul Sorvino.... ¶ Nov. 11 at 3: "Red Salute" (1935, Sidney Lanfield), with Barbara Stanwyck and Robert Young.... ¶ Nov. 11 at 4: "Soak the Rich" (1936, Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur), with Walter Connolly and Lionel Stander.... ¶ Nov. 10-11 at 1 and 3 and Nov. 14-16 at 2: "Army Infiltration" (1953), an episode of "I Led 3 Lives," with Richard Carlson; "Black Lead" (1953), an episode of "Biff Baker, U.S.A.," with Alan Hale, Jr.; and "Red Tentacles" (1952), an episode of "Sky King," with Kirby Grant.

ADAM CLAYTON POWELL, JR., STATE OFFICE BUILDING, 163 W. 125th St. (873-5040)—Nov. 8 at 6:30: "Black Family Unity: History of Africans in America" (1989).... ¶ Nov. 9 at 1: "Nelson Mandela: Free at Last" (1990, Rory O'Connor); "Classified People" (1988, Yolande Zauberman); and "Biko: Breaking the Silence" (1988).... ¶ Nov. 9 at 6:30: "Making 'The Spook Who Sat by the Door'" (1990, Greg Mills), a documentary; "The Spook Who Sat by the Door" (1973, Ivan Dixon), with Lawrence Cook; and "Black and Blue" (1987, Lamar Williams), a documentary.

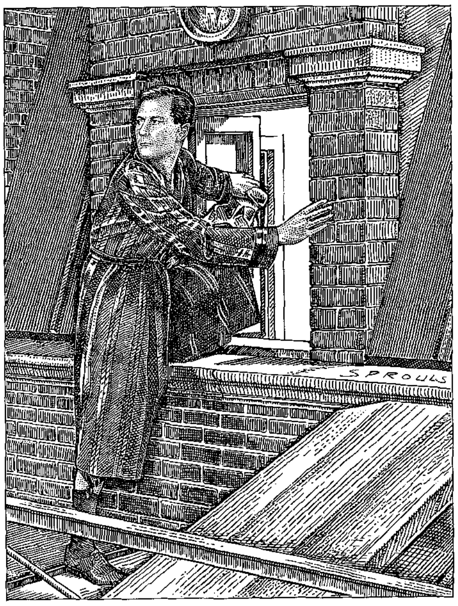
IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.

IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Terrence Rafferty.)

AKIRA KUROSAWA'S DREAMS—Not one of its eight segments feels like a real dream. The kind of power that Kurosawa aims for, and intermittently achieves, in this picture is less oneiric than ceremonial. The film is a succession of sweeping dramatic gestures and lofty incantations performed in an atmosphere of hushed solemnity. The second half of "Dreams" is weak: the fifth episode, "Crows," about a fantasy encounter with van Gogh, is a thin conceit; and the remaining three segments are all static, self-conscious, and didactic. But there's greatness in the film's first hour. The opening segment, "Sunshine Through the Rain," is the vision of a small child who wanders into a forest and witnesses a wedding procession of foxes; the sequence has a wholly original sense of the rapturous fear and awe we feel when we first come upon the wonders of the natural world. The second episode, "The Peach Orchard," is also lovely (though its mood and pace are too similar to those of the first). The third segment, "The Blizzard," about four men trapped in a snowstorm, is all snow, howling-wind effects, and bleak, undifferentiated vistas of despair, until Kurosawa pulls a miracle out of the white void: a woman in long black hair and diaphanous robes appears to the party's leader as he battles sleep. It's a transcendent image, perhaps the most piercing ever made of the desires that keep people from surrendering to death. And the fourth episode, "The Tunnel," about a man returning from war and encountering his dead comrades, is a brilliant, hypnotic piece of filmmaking. With Akira Terao, who plays the dreamer in six of the segments; Mieko Harada as the Snow Fairy; Martin Scorsese as van Gogh; and Chishu Ryu. Cinematography by Takao Saito and Masaharu Ueda. In Japanese.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 9/10/90.) (Angelika Film Center.)



Joel McCrea in "Foreign Correspondent"

L'ATALANTE (1934)—This extraordinary film was the only full-length feature directed by Jean Vigo, who died (at the age of twenty-nine) just three weeks after its première in 1934. The movie had been drastically cut by the distributor for that first release; it was partially restored in 1940, and it has now been given another major renovation. This version, prepared by Pierre Philippe and Jean-Louis Bompoint, adds about nine minutes of footage, and the restorers discovered a pristine nitrate print of a cut of the movie which obviously preceded the distributor's intervention: Vigo's film now looks and sounds better than ever. The screen[illegible]y, rewritten by Vigo and Albert Riéra from an original scenario by Jean Guinée, tells the simple story of a pair of newlyweds named Jean (Jean Dasté) and Juliette (Dita Parlo): he's the captain of a river barge called L'Atalante, and she's a girl from one of the villages on his route. As they travel down the river, they become impatient with each other; they are separated, then find each other again, and life resumes its intended course. Vigo treats the story the way a jazz musician treats a popular song, improvising on the melody by plunging into its carefully sequenced chords and predictable rhythms and taking them apart to see what they're made of. He is the most playful and the least rigid of the great film artists: his images seduce us with the promise of a larger, richer world and unbounded freedom to roam in it—the promise, that is, of endless stimulation, inexhaustible sensations. The best thing about this new version is that, for all the restorers' diligence, the film is still messy, imperfect, defiantly incomplete; it's a collection of inspired fragments, the sketchbook of an artist whose imagination was, and will forever remain, gloriously immature. Michel Simon plays a rambunctious old salt called Père Jules, who is the presiding spirit of the movie. Also with Louis Lefèvre and Gilles Margaritis. The stunning cinematography is by Boris Kaufman; Maurice Jaubert wrote the lovely score. In French.—T.R. (11/5/90) (Lincoln Plaza.)

Au Revoir les Enfants ("Goodbye, Children"; 1987)—It's set in Occupied France in 1944, when the writer-director Louis Malle was an eleven-year-old at a Catholic boys' boarding school near Fontainebleau that sheltered several Jewish boys. The Gestapo learned they were there, and sent the ones they found to Auschwitz, and the headmaster to a work camp. One of the Jewish boys was in Malle's class, but Malle didn't get to know him well and didn't realize that he was Jewish. For the dramatic purposes of the movie, he has conceived a close friendship between his alter ego, the fair-haired Julien Quentin (Gaspard Manesse), and the dark boy who is using the false name Jean Bonnet (Raphaël Fejtö). But nothing comes into clear focus—not the boy's attitudes, not even the images. The film (especially the first half) seems padded, formal, discreet. It's like watching a faded French classic. And there's something unseemly about the way Jean is used as an aesthetic object—spiritual, sensitive, exotic. With Francine Racette as Julien's mother and François Négret as the informer. In French.—P.K. (Cinema Village; starting Nov. 14.)

Avalon—In legend, Avalon is an earthly paradise. The writer-director Barry Levinson uses the name as his Rosebud: it's carved into the façade of the castlelike Baltimore apartment house where the five Krichinsky brothers, Jews who immigrated from Eastern Europe before the First World War, make their first American home. In Levinson's view, those early years were a golden age. The film is set mostly during his own childhood, in the late forties, when his parents move to the suburbs, and TV breaks up the clan's social patterns, and the surviving brothers have divided into feuding factions. The scattered fine comic moments don't make up for the wide streak of fuddy-duddyism in the notion that the family used to be the bulwark of the nation's value system. The movie is an elegy to a mythical past and people emerge from the theatre sniffling. They've been told they're suffering from soul-sickness—the loss of unity, harmony, family music. With the quietly witty Elizabeth Perkins as the American-born young wife who doesn't buy into Levinson's vision of how great the past was. Trapped living with her bickering Old World in-laws, she's practically stiff from repressed annoyance, but she's too decent and too timid to explode. Aidan Quinn is persuasive as her affable salesman husband who's not going to get caught between his wife and his mother (Joan Plowright); his specialty is keeping the peace. The peppy Kevin Pollak is Quinn's cousin and business partner. Armin Mueller-Stahl is the paperhanger grandfather Sam Krichinsky, the life-spirit central character who makes the points that Levinson wants to put across. Also with Lou Jacobi, and Elijah Wood as the child Michael. Cinematography by Allen Daviau.—P.K. (10/22/90) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex. Loews 19th Street East 6, Gemini, Worldwide Cinemas, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex.)

The Blue Angel (1929)—The director, Josef von Sternberg, had been working in Hollywood for more than fifteen years when he went to Germany, at Emil Jannings' request, to direct this film; he had directed Jannings in "The Last Command," one of the two American silent films that had won Jannings the Academy Award in 1927-28, and Jannings wanted him to guide his first sound film. They set in motion the Marlene Dietrich myth that was eventually to surpass their fame. Adapted from Heinrich Mann's novel "Professor Unrath," this film deals with the breakdown of an authoritarian personality. Jannings plays the inhibited, tyrannical high-school instructor who is prudishly indignant about his students' visiting Lola Lola (Dietrich), the singer at the Blue Angel; he goes to the café to put a stop to it and instead succumbs to her callous, impassive sexuality. Dietrich's Lola Lola is a rather coarse, plump young beauty; as she sings "Falling in Love Again," her smoldering voice and sadistic indifference suggest sex without romance, love, or sentiment. The pedant becomes her husband, her slave, her stooge; he travels with the café troupe, hawking dirty pictures of his wife. Dietrich is extraordinary, and "The Blue Angel" is a movie you can admire sequence by sequence, because it's made in an imaginative, atmospheric style, yet you may feel that you don't really like it on an emotional level; the sexual humiliation gets very heavy in the scenes in which the teacher, now a clown, returns to his home town and to his old classroom. With Hans Albers. Songs by Friedrich Hollaender (later Frederick Hollander). (A 1959 American remake directed by Edward Dmytryk starred Curt Jurgens and Mai Britt.) In German.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 12.)

Escape (1940)—An utterly unconvincing anti-Nazi picture starring Norma Shearer and Robert Taylor. He plays the American-born son of an imprisoned German woman (Alla Nazimova, implausible as a German but a pleasure to see in any role). The director, Mervyn LeRoy, takes forever to set up the maneuvers by which Taylor rescues his mother, and the villain, Conrad Veidt, is so much more attractive than the hero that the whole thing turns into a feeble, overproduced joke. With Philip Dorn, Bonita Granville, Albert Basserman, and Felix Bressart. For the script, Arch Oboler and Marguerite Roberts are the culprits; Ethel Vance wrote the novel.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Nov. 11-12.)

Fantasia (1940)—Disney enlisted an odd assortment of collaborators (among them Stokowski, who did it voluntarily, and Stravinsky, who was brought in involuntarily), and this grab bag of ambitious animated shorts—an attempt to combine high art and mass culture—was publicized as if it were an artistic landmark. Disney's animators provided visual interpretations of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor (in Stokowski's transcription, which is a precursor of the musical processing in "2001") and of hyped-up excerpts from the "Nutcracker" Suite, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," "The Rite of Spring," the "Pastoral Symphony," "The Dance of the Hours," and "A Night on Bald Mountain" (which somehow leads into the "Ave Maria"). Volcanoes erupt and dinosaurs battle during "The Rite of Spring," garlanded girl centaurs cavort during Beethoven's "Pastoral." Initially, the film was a box-office failure, but it proved successful in revivals, especially in the early seventies, when it became a popular head film, because of such ingredients as the abstract first section, the mushroom dance during the "Nutcracker" (one of the liveliest sequences), and the overly bright—somewhat psychedelic—color. "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," featuring Mickey Mouse, and parts of other sequences are first-rate Disney, but the total effect is grotesquely kitschy—P.K. (Gramercy, Sutton, Guild, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex.)

Foreign Correspondent (1940)—Hitchcock appears to have concocted this spy thriller out of all the breathtaking climaxes he'd been hoarding; there's the assassination with the gun concealed by a newsman's camera, the Dutch windmill going against the wind, and a tremendous finale aboard a transatlantic plane from London on the very day war is declared. The plot that links all this is barely functional, and the jaunty reporter-hero (Joel McCrea) is held down a bit when he has to attend to the ever-busy heroine (Laraine Day), but the movie is intermittently first-rate, and the topnotch supporting cast includes George Sanders, Albert Basserman, Herbert Marshall, Edmund Gwenn, Martin Kosleck, Eduardo Ciannelli, Barbara Pepper, and Robert Benchley, who also had a hand in the dialogue. The script was by Charles Bennett and Joan Harrison.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Nov. 8-10. . . . ¶ Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 11.)

Ghost—It sounds like a horror movie, but it's a romantic fairy tale. The scariest thing about it is its shamelessness. A young New York bank executive, Sam (Patrick Swayze), is killed, on the street, at a moment in his life when everything seems to be going his way. After his death, Sam sticks around, as a spirit (and Swayze stays on screen, as a body). He attends his funeral; watches his beautiful girlfriend, Molly (Demi Moore), drift grief-stricken through the spectacular loft they

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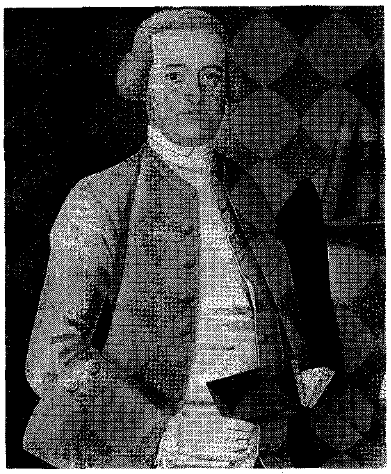

John Durand, *Dr. Leverett Hubbard,* 1768
oil on canvas; 32 x 27 inches

John Sloan, *Passing Through Gloucester*
1917; oil on canvas
24 1/4 x 20 1/4 inches; signed lower left

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ROMEO GIGLI

had just moved into; and then devotes himself to protecting her from the people who killed him. Through a reluctant psychic (Whoopi Goldberg), he tries to communicate with Molly; later, an experienced ghost (Vincent Schiavelli) teaches him how to move objects and break stuff. In this movie, death is treated as if it were merely a form of disability, one of those handicaps we've seen people struggle bravely with in TV movies—something for the individual to triumph over, with will power, hard work, and love. This creamy-toned fantasy, directed by Jerry Zucker from a screenplay by Bruce Joel Rubin, certainly pushes the audience's emotional buttons. It's a twentysomething hybrid of "It's a Wonderful Life" and some of the goofier, more solemn episodes of "The Twilight Zone," and there's not a trace of wit or irony in it. Its images of death have a soothing banality, like a greeting-card message from the world beyond. Also with Tony Goldwyn and Rick Aviles.—T.R. (7/30/90) (Loews 19th Street East 6, Manhattan Twin, and Embassy.)

Lauren Bacall, Rock Hudson, and Dorothy Malone in "Written on the Wind"

GoodFellas—The director, Martin Scorsese, gives you a lift. He loves the Brooklyn organized-crime milieu, because it's where distortion, hyperbole, and exuberance all commingle. His mobsters are high on having a wad of cash in their pockets. The movie is about being cock of the walk, with banners flying and crowds cheering. Based on Nicholas Pileggi's nonfiction book "Wiseguy," it's a triumphant piece of filmmaking—journalism and sociology presented with the brio of drama. But the three major hoods, played by Ray Liotta, Robert De Niro, and Joe Pesci, don't have a strong enough presence, and the movie lacks the juice and richness that come with major performances. (It's like the Howard Hawks "Scarface" without Scarface.) What you respond to is Scorsese's bravura: the filmmaking process becomes the subject of the movie. Watching it is like getting strung out on pure sensation. Paul Sorvino as Paulie and Lorraine Bracco as Karen both come through, and Tony Darrow as a restaurant owner, Welker White as a drug courier who needs her lucky hat to make a coke delivery, and other performers in minor roles give the movie a frenzied, funny texture. The screenplay is by Pileggi and Scorsese; the cinematography is by Michael Ballhaus; the editing is by Thelma Schoonmaker.—P.K. (9/24/90) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Loews 19th Street East 6, Cinema I, 86th Street East Twin, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Henry & June—Philip Kaufman's wonderful new film shows us the writers Henry Miller (Fred Ward) and Anaïs Nin (Maria de Medeiros) in the first year of their acquaintance, the period of their brief, intense love affair. It's the love story of two people who are making themselves, and each other, up as they go along: Miller and Nin are at once real people and the products of their own imaginations—collaborators in a matched pair of literary myths. And the action unfolds in and around a city that seems both itself and a figment of itself: the Paris of the thirties. Kaufman brings out the bizarre, almost monstrous comedy of this odd literary/sexual love affair; he presents it as a kind of parody image of relationships between men and women. The third major character, Miller's wife, June (Uma Thurman), is the most mysterious presence here. She seems to represent a demonic, annihilating sexual force, but by the end she's almost a tragic figure; Miller and Nin have given each other the strength to write her out of their lives, in the most literal sense. The actors are splendid: Kaufman gets miraculously intelligent performances from Ward and de Medeiros, and Thurman—uninhibited yet also weirdly delicate—gives the picture a jolt every time she appears. (It's as if a character from a Strindberg chamber drama had barged into "Design for Living.") The movie creates a world, and Kaufman is both affectionate toward and clear-eyed about the people who live in it: he's concerned more with *enjoying* his characters, in all their contradictions, than with explaining them. The material plays as rich, dark erotic farce—a comedy about the duplicity of writers. Also with Richard E. Grant (as Nin's husband) and Kevin Spacey. The screenplay, by Kaufman and his wife, Rose, is based on Nin's diary. Superb cinematography by Philippe Rousselot.—T.R. (10/8/90) (Baronet, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, and Metro Cinemas.)

The Man with the Golden Gun (1974)—Set in the Orient, this is the ninth—and one of the more dispirited—of the James Bond series. The production is a little snappier than in the preceding voodoo one ("Live and Let Die"), and this time Guy Hamilton's direction isn't quite as crude, but the script lacks satiric insolence, and the picture grinds on humorlessly. The villain Christopher Lee's fanged smile is the only attraction. With that iceberg Roger Moore as Bond, Britt Ekland, Maud Adams, and Hervé Villechaize. Written by Richard Maibaum and Tom Mankiewicz—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 9-10.)

Miller's Crossing—A cold, clever period gangster movie by the Coen brothers. (Ethan produces and Joel directs, from a script they've written together.) Essentially, it's an academic exercise, a pastiche of the intricately plotted, morally ambiguous crime fiction of Dashiell Hammett: the screenplay incorporates large chunks of "Red Harvest" and "The Glass Key," with a notion or two from "The Maltese Falcon" thrown in. The Coens have certainly done their homework: their movie is a brilliant reading of Hammett. But that's all it is. The picture seems to have no life of its own, and the Coens' formal control and meticulously crafted ironies become, after a while, rather depressing. This is not so much a gangster movie as an extended, elaborate allusion to one. With Gabriel Byrne, Marcia Gay Harden, John Turturro, Jon Polito, J. E. Freeman, and Albert Finney (who is, by a long shot, the most entertaining performer in the movie). The cinematography, by Barry Sonnenfeld, is handsome, but in a studied and not very expressive way.—T.R. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Coronet, Chelsea Cinemas, and Carnegie Screening Room.)

Octopussy (1983)—This is probably the most casual of the James Bond series, and in some ways it's more like the Bob Hope and Bing Crosby "Road" comedies than it is like the Bonds. It features a chase sequence in a crowded marketplace, with a great camera angle on a camel looking up and doing a double take as an automobile flies over its head. And among the disguises that Bond — Roger Moore—uses are a gorilla suit and an alligator outfit that doubles as a boat. Moore gets most of his effects here by the spark in his worried, squinched-up eyes; he may not be heroic, but he's game. This fourteenth in the Bond series (or thirteenth if you don't include "Casino Royale") is set against a tourist-paradise India. It's not the latest-model Cadillac; it's a beat-out old Cadillac, kept running with junk-yard parts. But it rattles along agreeably, even though the director, John Glen, seems to lose track of the story, and neither he nor the writers (George MacDonald Fraser, with Richard Maibaum and Michael G. Wilson) appear to have thought out the women's roles. The picture doesn't deliver on the chic perversities suggested by the inelegant title (and some of the décor). As Octopussy, the beautiful amazon Maud Adams is disappointingly warm and maternal—she's rather mooshy.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 9-10.)

Pacific Heights—It's supposed to be a thriller, but it's more like an executive decision to make a thriller. The director, John Schlesinger, has his professionalism—it shows in the clean, efficient staging. But the fun is missing; he scares you only by making you nervous. Melanie Griffith and Matthew Modine are the San Francisco lovers who fix up a Victorian house (on Potrero Hill); Michael Keaton is the sicko scam artist who takes over one of their two rental units and calls the police when they try to evict him. It's a drag that we're expected to identify with the dull young couple; the tenant with the perverted legalistic mind and the fiendish Cupid's-bow smile provides the only gleams of interest. A promising cast—it includes the uncredited Beverly D'Angelo, and Laurie Metcalf, Dorian Harewood, Carl Lumbly, Mako, Tracey Walter, Dan Hedaya, Luca Bercovici, Buy Boyd, and Tippi Hedren as rich Florence—is all but thrown away. The screenplay is by Daniel Pyne; the cinematography is by Amir Mokri.—P.K. (10/22/90) (Gotham Cinema, Chelsea Cinemas, and Criterion Center.)

Postcards from the Edge—This tale of a sorrowful, wisecracking starlet (Meryl Streep) whose brassy, boozing former-star mother (Shirley MacLaine) started her on sleeping pills when she was nine is camp without the zest of camp. It's camp played borderline straight—a druggy-Cinderella movie about an unformed girl who has to go past despair to find herself. The director, Mike Nichols, is a parodist who feigns sincerity, and his tone keeps slipping around. What's clear is that we're meant to be enthralled by the daughter's radiant face, her refinement, her honesty. Nichols keeps the camera on Streep as if to prove that he can make her a popular big star—a new Crawford or Bette Davis. (She remains distant, emotionally atonal.) The tacky, bright-colored film—a near-plotless version of a woman's picture—is weightless, yet it's watchable. Its jadedness appeals to the narcissism of show-biz insiders and to the would-be insider in the rest of us. (Nichols is acclaimed for being hip to the Zeitgeist.) There are a lot of people to look at: Gene Hackman, Dennis Quaid, Richard Dreyfuss, Annette Bening, Robin Bartlett, C. C. H. Pounder, Oliver Platt, Gary Morton, Mary Wickes, Rob Reiner, Simon Callow, Michael Ontkean, Pepe Serná, and Dana Ivey. The screenplay, by Carrie Fisher (with Nichols' uncredited collaboration), is based on her novel; cinematography by Michael Ballhaus. —P.K. (10/22/90) (Chelsea Cinemas, and Regency. . . . ¶ Beekman; through Nov. 8.)

Presumed Innocent—A ponderous adaptation of Scott Turow's cunningly plotted mystery novel. The director, Alan J. Pakula, has shot and paced the movie as if it weren't a mystery but a serious character study, an art film. It's lit (by Gordon Willis) like "Cries and Whispers," only without the bright-red accents: the movie's palette seems to consist of brown and gray—earnest, business-suit colors. The lunacy of treating this story as a deep exploration of character is that the only thing we really want to know about the character in question—Rusty Sabich (Harrison Ford), a Midwestern prosecutor accused of murdering one of his colleagues (Greta Scacchi)—is: Did he do it or not? Ford, in what is probably an unplayable role, has to maintain a tense, repressed, impenetrable expression throughout. Bonnie Bedelia, as Rusty's nervous, self-deprecating wife, gives lovely shadings to a tough part. As the judge presiding over Rusty's trial, Paul Winfield supplies some sorely needed comedy. And Raul Julia, as the hero's lawyer, is an elegant, commanding presence in the courtroom scenes. Also with Brian Dennehy. Screenplay by Pakula and Frank Pierson.—T.R. (8/13/90) (Cinema 3.)

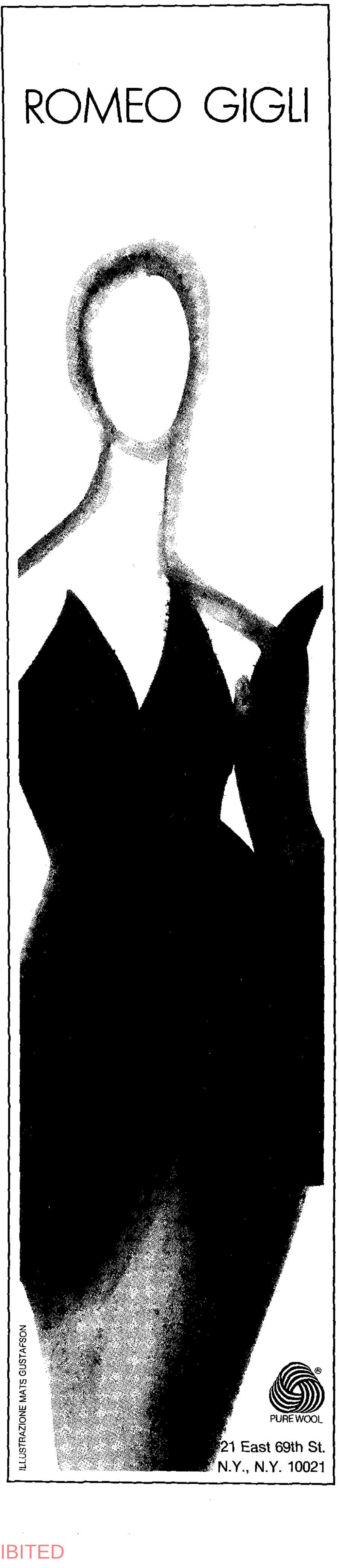
Saboteur (1942)—A mixed-up and overloaded American spy thriller by Alfred Hitchcock, with the unengaging Robert Cummings in the lead and an unappealing cast, featuring Priscilla Lane and Otto Kruger. Nothing holds together, but there are still enough scary sequences to make the picture entertaining. —P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 11.)

Susan and God (1940)—Susan, the upper-crust religious quack of Rachel Crothers' comedy of manners, is not really in Joan Crawford's range. Crawford can't provide the charm that Gertrude Lawrence reportedly gave the role on Broadway—when Crawford is being intellectually frivolous, it's merely tiresome. The director, George Cukor, and the scenarist, Anita Loos, must certainly have been aware of the problem, because Loos supplied some new characters, and Cukor lavished affection on the actresses—Marjorie Main and Constance Collier—who played them. As the caretaker, Marjorie Main practically walks off with the picture. Fredric March does all he can in the role of Susan's husband, who has sensibly taken refuge in drink. With Rita Hayworth, Ruth Hussey, Rose Hobart, John Carroll, Gloria De Haven, and Nigel Bruce. It's not a good comedy, but it has a certain fascination, because the theme is such an odd one for Hollywood to have attempted at all.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Nov. 11-12.)

The Tarnished Angels (1958)—Rock Hudson said that this movie was not like his others—that he disapproved of it, and that such nasty stories shouldn't be presented to the American public. The nasty material is William Faulkner's "Pylon," adapted by George Zuckerman. Set in New Orleans in 1931, the movie attempts to re-create Faulkner's hectic, feverish atmosphere and heroes—the ex-war pilots who will do anything to sustain the thrill of flying. The daredevils are played by Robert Stack, Dorothy Malone as his promiscuous parachutist wife, and Jack Carson as a mechanic; Hudson, pooped as ever, is the heavy-drinking reporter who wants to do a story on the trio. This movie would have been better—in its odd, neo-thirties sort of way—if the last quarter hour had been left out. It's the kind of bad movie that you know is bad—and yet you're held by the mixture of polished style and quasi-melodramatics achieved by the director, Douglas Sirk. —P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 8.)

To Sleep with Anger—A domestic comedy with an unusually dense texture. It's shot straightforwardly, in a style that appears realistic almost to the point of banality, and yet right from the start there's something unsettling about its plainness: Charles Burnett, who wrote and directed, keeps hinting that things are not necessarily what they seem. Gideon (Paul Butler) and Suzie (Mary Alice) are a middle-aged black couple who live in Los Angeles; their roots, however, are in the rural South, and they've retained quite a few of the customs, values, and superstitions of the culture they were brought up in. The story gets going when a friend of theirs from back home appears on their doorstep; they invite him to stay with them a while, and he does. This unexpected guest, Harry (Danny Glover), turns out to be a gifted confidence man, with a sharp eye for human weakness: he's a grinning, honey-tongued demon. He uses his backcountry wisdom with sinister, obscure intent, for purposes that Burnett, cunningly, allows to remain ambiguous. The presence of Harry gives the realistic surface of the movie a vibrant strangeness: he seems to transform everything that happens in these clean, comfortable living rooms and kitchens into dark rituals performed in the woods in the dead of night. The picture has a risky, complex tone: it's a comedy, because the family's threatened world is set right in the end, but there are moments along the way when the intimations of unseen controlling forces—both in Glover's elegantly suggestive performance and in the eerie, calm precision of Burnett's direction—give us the creeps. Also with Richard Brooks, Carl Lumbly, Ethel Ayler, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Vonetta McGee, Davis Roberts, Sy Richardson, and Devaughn Walter Nixon. There's a brief appearance by the blues singer Jimmy Witherspoon, who performs a mournful, robust version of "See See Rider."—T.R. (11/5/90) (Angelika Film Center.)

Written on the Wind (1957)—A Texas oil millionaire (Robert Stack) sweeps a secretary (Lauren Bacall) off her feet, marries her, and then gets to wondering whether the baby that she's going to have is really his or if it's the child of his best friend, a geologist (Rock Hudson). The Texan's nympho sister (Dorothy Malone) encourages his suspicions while trying to trap the geologist, who is, indeed, in love with the wife. The director, Douglas Sirk, shows his talent for whipping up sour, stylized soap operas in posh settings. With Robert Keith. The script by George Zuckerman is based on Robert Wilder's novel. —P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 8.)



POLO RALPH LAUREN

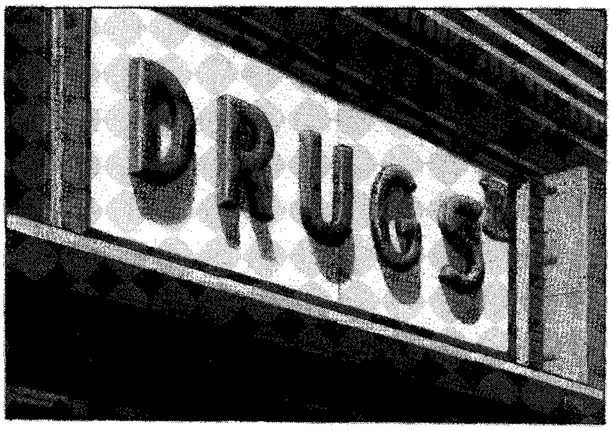
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

ON Monday morning, we went out to mail a letter. These days, mail has become an almost completely abstract activity in the lives of many of us. The phone rings at three in the morning with the long-distance bad news, and the good news comes—for us, at least—mostly by way of pink message slips ("While You Were Out: The I.R.S. called. Mistake!"). The truly urgent news comes hand-delivered by Federal Express or DHL. Mostly, what gets mailed is what doesn't really matter. But going to the post office is still one of our favorite ways of feeling like a citizen: standing in line there on a Monday morning is like being in an allegory of Good Government in a Renaissance painting. Up there on the wall are the bad citizens; over here in line are the good citizens; and between them is the government, doing its job—telling the good citizens to keep an eye out for the bad citizens, warning the bad citizens that the good citizens are onto them, and reminding everybody that government is an endless round of little shared duties.

We told the clerk that we wanted a book of twenty-five-cent stamps. He asked us if we wanted some special-occasion stamps, and we said O.K., so he gave us a book of the newest special-occasion stamps. These stamps are a series drawn in a crude, cartoon-like style and are illustrated with the kind of bright, fatuous colors that we associate with the cartoon heroine Rainbow Brite. One shows seven stylized flowers—a pinwheel daisy, a star-shaped tulip, and so on—fanned out across a bright-orange background. "Thinking of you," it says above the flowers, in the penmanship of the girl you loved in sixth grade. In the upper right corner the stamp is signed by our government: "USA." Stamp No. 2 shows an eager little songbird peeking out of an old-fashioned rural mailbox. The mailbox is red against an Astro-Turf-green background, and the flag on the mailbox bears a bright-red heart. "Love you," the pretty cursive hand announces. The government's signature this time is in the lower left corner. A third stamp shows a bright rainbow arch against a blue sky, with a chubby white cloud crossing the sky on each side. "Best Wishes," the government of the United States says, in the hollow of the arch. The new stamps seem to have been designed by a collaborating Hanna-Barbera and Jeff Koons.



We wanted to say, "Hey, these aren't the stamps we had in mind," but the line was pressing behind us. We put one on our letter, dropped it in the box, and left the post office thinking: What happened to the grave faces of the Presidents? What happened to the inventors, with their lined and noble faces filling up the one side of the stamp, and their invention—the frequency modulator, the induction motor, the steamboat—visible in the distance on the other side? Where have they gone? Where, in this moment of crisis, is Yosemite? Kitty Hawk? Warm Springs? The Mayo brothers at their clinic? We don't want the government telling us that it is thinking of us, that it loves us, that it wishes us only the best. We don't even want the government helping us tell our neighbors and families—let alone the landlord, the phone company, and Con Ed—these things. When did the government enter the warmth racket? Where has adorability ever got a democracy? It seemed to us as we walked home that the new stamps were the last, hollow echo of the Reagan years: the philatelic expression of the belief that it is the whole duty of government to make people feel just a little bit perkier than they felt before.

The hardest thing for Americans to sacrifice in a perplexing time, we have begun to think, is the cult of manufactured cheerfulness. But, for our part, we're suddenly hungry for serious stamps. We want the President to be staying up late, his face creased, and when they bring the designs for the new stamps around we want him to say, "Get serious, guys." We want him to have the weary, beleaguered look of a post-office clerk, because he knows that the problem you solve now is nothing compared with the problem right there in line behind it. From now on, we want to be the ones who cheer up the government. We want to mail the President a letter with a stamp that has an engraving of James Buchanan on it, and in the letter we want to say, "These are tough times, Mr. President." And then we want to consider adding at the end, in black ink, in our own ragged hand, "Thinking of you, love you, best wishes."

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A FRIEND writes:

I first encountered the music of Leonard Bernstein in a high-school production of "West Side Story." My high school had an ambitious drama program, but the troika that ran it—the drama teacher, the director of the orchestra, and the director of the chorus—thought long and hard before they decided to tackle "West Side Story." The limiting factor was the score, and what finally induced them to make the attempt was the conjunction of a sufficient number of musicians capable of handling its complexities. (The first trumpeter told me he admired his part so much that he seriously considered stealing the sheet music.) Casting was more haphazard. I got the role of Bernardo, the Puerto Rican gang leader. Since I was an upstate suburban Wasp who had never been in a fight, this was serious casting against type. Through three months of rehearsing, we all did our best to live up to the work that had been entrusted to us. The choreography was based on someone's memory of the original Broadway production. The stage manager secured a siren and a flashing red light to simulate the offstage arrival of the police after Riff and I were stabbed. The moral crisis of our production arose over the question of a curtain call. All high-school plays have curtain calls: when you're sixteen (and perhaps when you're older than sixteen), what greater payoff is there than an audience's applause? But we in the cast realized that smiling individual bows after the experience of "West Side Story" would be emotionally unseemly. We settled for a single opening of the curtain on a silent, standing company—no smiles, no bows.

Our "West Side Story" wasn't a bad way to be introduced to Leonard Bernstein. At that age, I couldn't have explained why the music was good, but I knew that it *was* good—something I would not have known about, say, Beethoven's "Grosse Fuge." Bernstein lived with complicated music—studying it, playing it, writing it—all his career. But he also had access to a vein of romanticism that sounded as if it sprang from a source midway between light opera and Gustav Mahler, and he was forever playing its direct and emotional utterances off the jagged pulse of jazz, or off some technique from "serious" music's post-Schoenberg bag of tricks. Bernstein's compositions managed to combine the throb of a soul with the zest of a musical omnivore. But the throb, which I first heard as a teen-age Bernardo, was what predominated.

The day after Bernstein died, he became oddly omnipresent. Everywhere I went, it seemed, some part of him was on the radio. In a coffee shop in the Flatiron district, I heard the opening measures of his Beethoven's Ninth performed in Berlin shortly after the fall of the Wall. Even those who shared Bernstein's political opinions were occasionally baffled by some of the situations he put himself in. Yet, since there was not an ounce of cynicism in him, or a trace of the crust of dogma, it was appropriate that when one of the world's most cynical and dogmatic regimes fell to pieces he be a prime celebrator. Taking a quick hop in a taxi up Third Avenue, I heard a fragment of the music from the "Dance at the Gym" sequence of "West Side Story," during which Tony and Maria, the slum Romeo and Juliet, first see each other. The charging rhythms were pure show-biz Latin, as energetic as they were calculated. I remembered them well, for I and my fellow gang members had been required to dance some show-biz mambo to them, and I danced about as well as I fought. But the next big number in the musical, I recalled as I paid my fare, is "Maria" —Tony's rapturous solo about his new beloved. The last time I had heard that music was twenty years ago, over the high-school public-address system, which had been hooked up to let the offstage actors follow the performance from the greenroom. I could still remember every sinuous modulation. Boys will be learning it, and aging young men recalling it, I am convinced, far into the next century.

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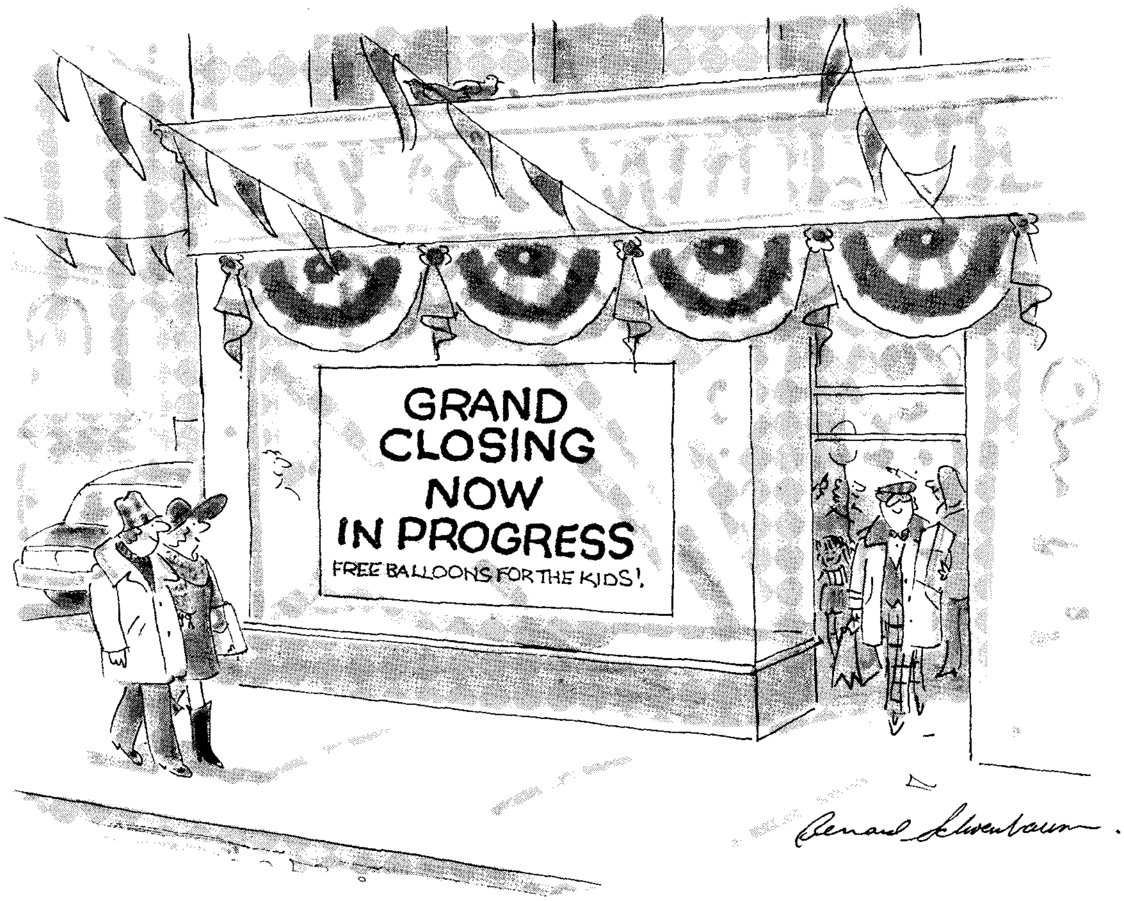
Sewn In

AS a rule of thumb, the more news a dance company generates on the front page of the paper, the less news it generates on the arts page. To a large extent, this was true of the Classical Dance Company of Cambodia, whose recent American tour was so full of symbolic importance and cloak-and-dagger tension that the group's artistic efforts came to seem almost secondary. By the time of the company's last engagement, at the Joyce Theatre, its story had been reduced to two episodes. The principal one was the identification of the company with the efforts of Cambodia as a whole to revive its cultural identity following the devastation wreaked by the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979, when some ninety per cent of the country's classical dancers and teachers met their deaths. The other episode concerned attempts to disrupt the tour, made by a shadowy band of people, perhaps belonging to a political faction inimical to Cambodia's current government, which still bears close ties to Vietnam. Suspicious-looking men trailed the dancers from city to city; at one point, a dancer was almost forced into a car during a kidnapping attempt; and members of the company were receiving anonymous threats up to their final days in New York. Moreover, by the time the company left New York for Phnom Penh, five of the twenty-five dancers had elected to stay in America—four as declared defectors, one as a student.

The student, Yim Devi, was the company's star. At the Joyce, it was she who really made one see what observers of Cambodian dance in turn-of-the-century Paris meant when they spoke of it as contortionist yet mesmerizing. She demonstrated how the performers can convey the illusion that their effects are not individually willed but somehow collectively received. Standing on top of a low table as the goddess Moni Makhala, Ms. Devi assumed a signature position of Cambodian dancing:

one sharply bent leg eased upward behind her until the heel of her flexed foot was just a few inches from her waist. Her other leg, already angled at the knee, gradually lowered her body to the table in a continuous legato phrase. Repose, serenity, the sense of time as a flowing river rather than a system of measurement—the very things that Pol Pot's regime had ripped from the dancers in their offstage lives—were summed up in this movement. Its quality of seamlessness was also a reminder of one of the most famous practices in Cambodian dance: the sewing of the dancers into their costumes several hours before the performance starts, so that their art becomes a second skin.


GRAND CLOSING NOW IN PROGRESS
FREE BALLOONS FOR THE KIDS!
Bernard Schoenbaum

We asked to observe one of the sewing sessions, and around four o'clock on the day of the third Joyce performance we presented ourself at the stage door. Eileen Blumenthal, a friendly American scholar of Cambodian dance, who was the company's executive producer on this tour, and who served as our unofficial translator, ushered us into a long dressing room, walled with mirrors, where five or six young women who were preparing to impersonate the Apsaras, the celestial goddesses of Cambodian mythology, had just been putting on the last touches of their makeup. Their faces were slightly flushed and without visible pores; their eyes were deeply expressive; their straight, glossy hair fell to their shoulders; their dress sizes could not have exceeded a five petite. They were standing in their underwear, each dancer holding a strapless corset in her hands. Once that corset was in place, a shiny tan leotard went over it. Then came the application of false eyelashes. The dancers were excited about that, because they had laid in a good stock of Western-style fixative during the tour. We asked what they usually used, and Ms. Blumenthal put the question to them in Cambodian. One dancer held up an index finger, rummaged around in a bag, and eventually produced a small vial half-filled with a viscous white substance. She opened the top and tipped the vial toward our nose. It smelled like burning rubber.

The dancers turned to the mirror to braid orchidaceous blossoms into their hair at the back. Then an older woman, a dresser, entered the room, carrying a needle about three inches long and some coarse white thread. She helped each dancer to wrap herself into her skirt, which was a bolt of thin pink or white fabric shot through with strands of lamé. The dresser helped to fold the tail end of the fabric in such a way that it formed a pleated sash in the front. Then she took the needle and sewed the skirt and the sash end together. Several ropes of metal necklaces were laid on each dancer's shoulders as a collar and were attached by thin chains to several thick metal belts that had been wrapped around her waist. Today, these belts are made of brass, but at one time the company's collection of them could probably have financed the yearly expenditures of the state of Vermont. At this stage of the preparations, there was little a dancer could do to complete her costume by herself. A sister Apsara tied ten bracelets on her—five for each wrist—and helped her put on anklets. Out in the hall, male dancers who would impersonate monkeys could be glimpsed on this or that errand; they had been stitched into their suits. One showed us some photographs he had taken of a black car in which a Cambodian dancer defected during the company's engagement in Lowell, Massachusetts. "Look, there's Proeung Chhieng, the artistic director," Ms. Blumenthal said, pointing to a lean man in one of the pictures. "He's watching his life slip away."

We took an hour's leave for dinner—the dancers ate a tiny bit of fruit in the dressing room—and when we came back it was time for the crowns. There are several kinds of headdresses in Cambodian classical dance; the crown, or *mkot*, for the Apsaras is the largest, the most complex, and by far the heaviest. The headpiece, of crisscrossing strips of metal, looks like the top of a medieval torture instrument and, according to the dancers, can feel perfectly awful. Jutting up from this base are three elaborately wrought metal spires, each about eighteen inches long. As one dance critic we know put it, the dancers wear little temples on their heads. Nobody hurried to put on her crown. One dancer sat listening to Khmer songs on a new Sony Walkman. Another fingered the box of a remote-control toy Lamborghini. A third showed us how she taped her *mkot* with an inconspicuous Band-Aid where the base tends to bite into the forehead.

Then an invisible signal was given, and each goddess lifted her crown onto her head. It was nearly eight o'clock. In a few moments, the Apsaras would go into the wings, and there each, holding her palms together, would remember the teachers and the spirits of the dance, in the hope that those spirits would prevent her from making a mistake and keep her *mkot* from hurting. Since four o'clock, no one, as far as we knew, had performed a single warmup movement.

After the performance, we finally caught up with Mr. Chhieng, a youngish-looking man with a florid complexion and a tired smile. The evening had gone off without incident, and he was relaxing after a late dinner with the company. We asked him what makes a great dancer. In a patchwork of Cambodian, English, and French, and with the assistance of Ms. Blumenthal and the company translator, Mr. Chhieng enumerated the inborn gifts that would render a little girl eligible for training: such physical endowments as a round face and a "svelte" body; a good memory; and elasticity. But the dancer is only the raw material of the Cambodian dance, he went on. The art begins when she delivers herself over to her teachers. "Say you're a gardener who wants to curve a plant to form the shape of a peacock," Mr. Chhieng said. "We do something like that."

Foxholes

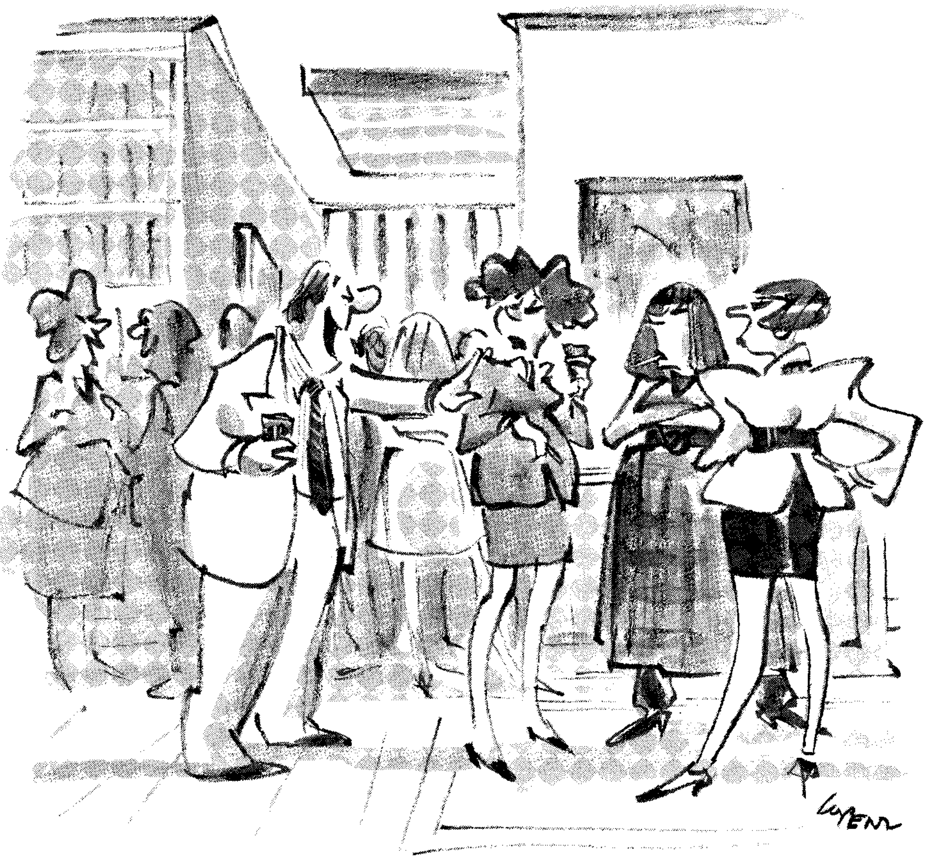
A FRIEND who lives way upstate writes:

This is kind of an embarrassing confession to make, but this fall I've been between projects and I've got deep into golf. What interests me most about the game is its unconscious, Zen aspect. I'm practicing what I call "calm recognition"—taking in the flowing contours of the links, drawing strength and inspiration from their open vistas, and letting the swing and the path of the ball take care of themselves. Sometimes, on a beautiful, crystalline afternoon, my game will suddenly fall into place. For four or five holes, one shot after another will sail exactly where I had planned it to go, and I'll start slipping into this blissful state I'm talking about. But then I tell myself, "Hey, this is serious golf I'm playing out here. Four more holes like this and I'm going to break par." And I get excited and score-conscious, and everything rapidly falls apart.

Sometimes my wife, who has just taken up the game, comes along. We throw our clubs into the pickup and drive over to Craig Wood, a scenic mountain course outside Lake Placid. Late one afternoon, as we were walking down the twelfth fairway my wife noticed a fox sitting on the edge of the rough. It was a red fox, against a reddish backdrop of foot-tall poverty grass. I've caught foxes in my headlights plenty of times, but this was the first good look I'd ever had at a stationary wild fox, and I realized that I'd never fully appreciated what an acutely attuned, refined-looking animal the fox is.

My wife, who grew up in a village in Uganda, was apprehensive, because the fox looked like the jackals that had occasionally attacked children there. I found it a little unusual and unsettling myself—this fox just sitting there in broad daylight, completely unintimidated. Then I thought, Maybe it has rabies. But it wasn't staggering around or foaming at the mouth; it looked perfectly healthy and in full possession of it faculties. (A few days later, I called up Kenneth Kogut, a senior wildlife biologist in the Department of Environmental Conservation, and he assured me that I had nothing to worry about on that score—that the nearest rabid foxes were in northern Franklin County.)

My wife and I went on with our game, a little nervously, and stepping up our pace a bit. But the fox stayed where it was. The next hole was a par 3 known as the Quarry. The pin is a hundred and seventy yards away, and you have to carry over a gully between a sandy, thinly vegetated slope that comes steeply down from the left and a spruce swamp, to the right. The tee is at the level of the spruces' bristling, blue-green crowns. I took a reading on the wind with a finger and pulled out my 7 iron, and as I leaned down to tee



"Hey! Love the way women are beginning to laugh at themselves."

"I'll give you three cans of Happy Herds Condensed Milk for two cans of Affaire de Coeur Flaky Salmon."

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up my ball I noticed that the fox had followed us. We watched it pick its way furtively down the slope and curl up under a bush right on the line to the pin. It almost seemed to be taking an interest in the game.

Both our shots cleared the gully. The path to the green traversed the slope halfway down, and passed twenty feet below the fox, which didn't bother to move. It lay there on the sand, in the shade of the bush, panting softly, its pink tongue drooping from one side of its long, pointed muzzle, its ears erect, and its unfathomable eyes gazing past us, avoiding contact.

Later in the week, we played the course again. We reached the Quarry a few hours earlier this time, and there were two foxes, standing on the slope below. It was clear from their relaxed, proprietary stance that they were at home—that their lair was here. The next day, I went to the library and did some reading on foxes. One book said that sheltered, well-drained slopes or gullies are among their favorite den sites. Often they will enlarge an existing woodchuck burrow. The purpose of the den is to provide privacy and protection for the vixen and her pups—she delivers as many as ten, usually in late March or early April, in a grass-lined chamber ten feet or so below the ground. (The tunnel system of the whelping den can be seventy-five feet long.) Most of the time, both adults sleep on the ground outside the den's mouth, even after the ground has frozen.

We passed within feet of the foxes, played out the hole, and went on to fourteen. As we prepared to tee off, two more foxes dashed out onto the fairway, one with a chipmunk in its mouth, the other hot on its heels. These foxes were about three-quarters the size of the others—surely their pups. They were playing tag. The first was racing in circles, glancing back over its shoulder and dodging to the left or right in a playful burst of speed whenever the other closed in. We had good views of them both, and their coats weren't blazing red, like those of most red foxes, but more like lions' tawny gold, with black swaths of fur across their shoulders and backs, and dark-brown tails and underfur. According to another book I'd found at the library, they were what are known as "cross foxes"—with a genetically governed color phase that shows up in maybe twenty-five per cent of red foxes. I also learned that the present-day red foxes of the northeastern United States are crosses in another sense—between native red foxes and European ones, which fox hunters began to import in the seventeen-nineties. The fox is one of the most versatile and adaptable carnivores on the planet. Urban foxes are thriving in city parks in London, Minneapolis, and the Bronx, I read, and golf courses, with their intermittent brush, open meadows, and stands of trees, tend to be crawling with rodents and are therefore prime fox habitat.

When we returned to Craig Wood the following week, we got to talking about the foxes with a ranger, Al Glass, who was sitting in a cart at the first tee. He told us that they had been around for a couple of years, but he couldn't say exactly how many there were. "We found a thousand balls in one of their dens," he said. "They think the balls are eggs. They've been known to run out on the fairway and make off with your ball right under your nose. They actually improved one guy's position. As I understand it, if a wild animal moves your ball it's legal."

MY IDEAL

"He was a tall, large, and muscular man who liked to take advantage of that fact. He had a great, hairy torso and a stone wall abdomen on shanks that were . . . overwrapped with sinew and his strength sometimes seemed to burst through his arms the same way his arms sometimes burst through his shirts." This homoerotic paean to a distinguished writer—regrettably abbreviated for space—is the early work of Peter Hamill (with Alfred Aronowitz) in "Ernest Hemingway: The Life and Death of a Man" (Lancer Books, out of print). It shows the young, sensitive Hamill, not the postliberal hack.

—*Letter in the Village Voice.*

I FEEL that the author of this letter is too pessimistic. There's a tone of resignation I don't like, a so-much-for-him attitude I find presumptuous. Mr. Hamill is written off as a lost soul. But how can we know for sure that his sensitivity won't come back later, that he won't be saved in his middle or declining years? Even one moment from now—it's always possible. It's what happened to me.

Although I'm a woman, my own early years were basically just one long paean to the masculine physique. My perfect man was not a projection onto Ernest Hemingway but an abstraction, a pure construct I called My Ideal. Nonetheless, the concerns were similar: height, strength, abdominal hardness, body hair—the universals. Fortune didn't present me with an Alfred Aronowitz to collaborate in packaging my material, so all it amounted to was a series of idle handwritten *pensées*, illusory quests for embodied form. A surviving fragment:

> Maybe he's a dream, and yet he might be right around the size of a marble colossus, his muscled and hairy chest straining at the confines of his little skintight ribbed undershirt the way a heavy boulder would if encased in fragile netting of some kind.

These early intuitions were reinforced by observations of external reality, recorded over many years in a diary I labelled "PAEANS":

> Noticed a fireman (they're all gorgeous), one hand gripping axe, the other with strong sinews of wrist dangling just below sleeve of that black rubber overcoat they wear. His no doubt muscled arms invisible under sleeves, yet somehow an explosive quality came through.

> Male passenger sitting next to me on D train, powerful feet enwrapped by Earth shoes. Hair on backs of hands as he perused nihilist pamphlet, v. sexy.

> Shopping for present for [name deleted] in Barnacle Bill's [at that time a discount store, not upscale like today], saw guy, artistic loner obviously w/o a clue how staggeringly handsome he is, trying on Italian Merchant Marine mohair sommelier's jacket much too small. Bulges of his shoulders threatened to split seams of tight-fitting fabric—thought I'd die.

> Car trip w/[name irrelevant], summer shower, then sun came out just as we passed a Ready-Pump station, two grease monkeys in camouflage jumpsuits soaked to the skin, like great and drenched tropical cats.

> Seems to be new 80s fad of men wearing wallet tucked into front of pants waistband, buccaneer-style. Creates impression of abdominal muscle on varied builds—short, medium-short, small-medium, average, biggish, husky, massive, custom, apocalyptic.

BUT young and sensitive isn't enough if you're ambitious. Somewhere was a high plateau to strive for, and I felt ready to enlist the help of Alfred Aronowitz. When my letter, c/o his publisher, went unanswered, the rebuff was devastating. Why I couldn't forget it and move forward I can't explain. Maybe I wanted an excuse to immobilize myself: perfection or nothing. I became obsessed with Alfred Aronowitz as the ideal and only possible partner in the grand enterprise that would now never happen.

The last refuge of the obsessed is superstition. I turned to numerology for answers, studying crank medieval screeds and primitive iconography to learn how many weeks, months, or years lay between me and my unattainable goal: two (classical symbol of balance, justice, and death), ten (complete cycle of life and death in measurement system going back to Romans), three hundred and sixty-five (random figure obtained by throwing clamshells). And then, aggression being the last refuge of the superstitious, I

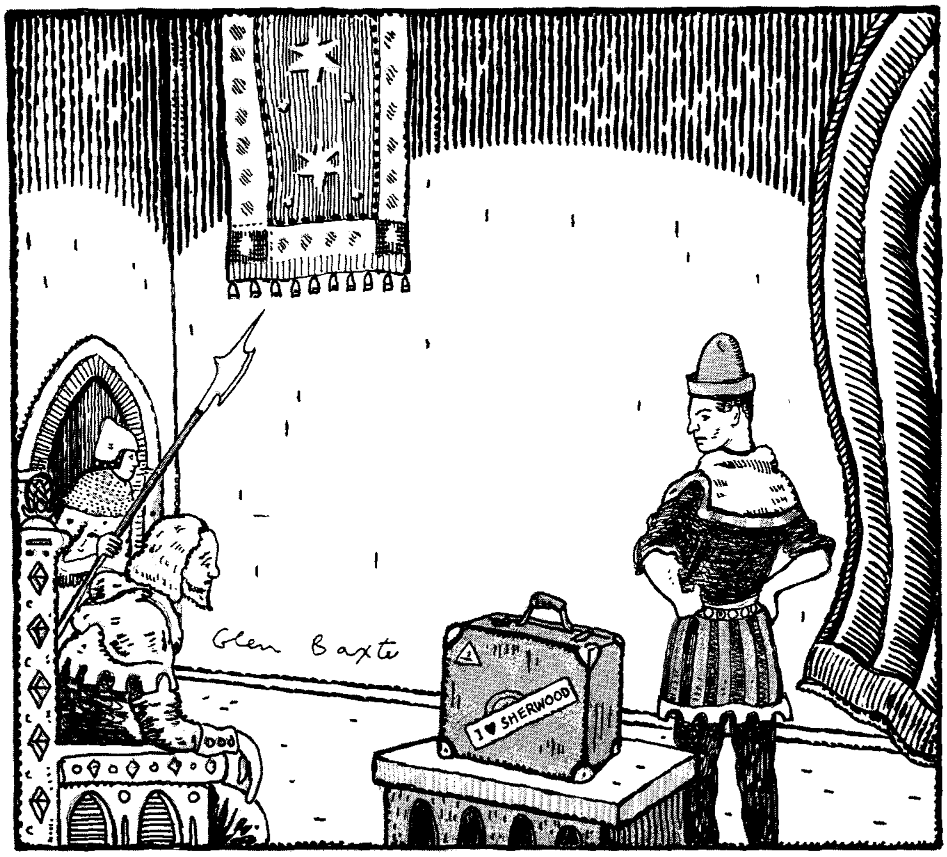
"Go deep!"

went into sadistic fantasies: Alfred Aronowitz totally in my power, his forearm muscles groaning against the half hitches in the hairy hemp seamen's rope. . . .

As such thoughts grew repulsive to me, the repulsion generalized to all of reality. One day I ran into an old friend in the gun store. It was fine weather, and he was in a great mood until he burst out, "You look so angry! What is all this anger about? What is your goddam problem with anger?" My problem, of course, was that my little toy dream world had shattered. Even my friend's gruff, Papa Bear charm had lost its magic. My hand accidentally brushed against his abdomen, and it was rock hard with repressed anxiety. Maybe he, too, had suddenly seen that life was no timeless Eden full of noble strength clad in some torn shreds of fur but the exact opposite.

Paean from a typical evening around that time:

> Dinner at [omitted]'s house, seated next to one of top men in city—could easily put out contract on any guest at table yet mysteriously just "happens" to never get around to it. (Misguided notion of heroism?) Every sinew in room taut w/competitiveness at knuckling under to [then-powerful hostess], who bragged abt. her affair w/some Caribbean strongman and called French champagne by euphemism "sparkling wine" to bully us all into collusion w/totalitarian fantasy that she could redefine luxury drink as casual sub-alcoholic working-class commodity like Champale. Not one person (incl. self) w/guts to shove her nose in facts. Her current husband, some sort of ex-bullfighter, speaks no English, spent dinner reading own passport. To her right, ghastly world-champ social climber, [——], practically busted his shirtfront coming up w/new sentences containing the word "servants." Everybody like vultures, oohing and aahing abt. size of the fish and their "strong feelings" re some world disaster they took as private affront to sacred memory of how much hair they had in 1960s. Meanwhile, table centerpiece on closer inspection not row of coconuts but *actual shrunken heads w/the hair still on them,* which everybody pretended not to notice because nobody else saying anything or because saying something might halt flow of "sparkling wine" or diminish sense of entitlement to universe as their personal villa, salvage dump, and clinic. Hated self for sitting there like a mummy. Across table, one of those graybeard avuncular-doctor Norman Rockwell types w/lifetime of stored-up voltage a millimeter under surface. Dropped my napkin, saw his shank kick the cat.



"I'M AFRAID THIS HERALDS THE DAWN OF A MAJOR NEW OFFENSIVE, MY LIEGE!" ROARED THE RECEPTIONIST.

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At the time, I didn't view myself as embittered. Unable to admit perfectly normal feelings of failure and disappointment, I dwelled on what was wrong with people. Their humanly understandable unrealistic delusions drove me to some pretty cynical theories: "Let Jack do it," "I'm all right, Frank," "Rot in Hell, Harry"—the whole panoply of middle-age-malaise gallows philosophies came to me like newborn truths. I stopped being friends with women who gawked at younger men's bodies in public or described their portly husbands as Apollos. I picked a fight in a bar. Walked right up to her and for no good reason sneered, "How's your old man?" and she sloshed her Rattlesnake longneck beer at me on purpose. I guess that was when I bottomed out.

We assume that people going through these postliberal phases are enjoying themselves, but no one really likes having a crisis of lost youthful sensitivity. How did I get through it? Gardening helped. Also, it's easier for a woman, because when you collapse and harden your heart and turn on people, they can say, "Oh, she's into gardening now." It was a tough time, though. My point is, IT DOESN'T HAVE TO STAY THAT WAY. These things have a momentum, and you can ride them out.

Sure, it still crosses my mind, Maybe there's something in my mailbox today from "Alfred Aronowitz" (I've realized that he was unreal to me, an illusion or figurehead)—after all these years, a postcard from a foreign country, with an apology and an airtight excuse: "Shipwrecked in the Straits, pirates stole my files, sand in everything." But now, thank goodness, I'm able to feel guilty about having these foolish thoughts. It's a more mature—an enlightened sensitivity.

Anyway, my ideal has changed:

> Man w/stone wall face that sometimes bursts into smile. Possible to find fault, but life so regrettably abbreviated for space.

—Veronica Geng

BLUE SPRUCE

Laurel is up in the cool shadow on the porch roof, in dungarees and a sweatshirt, scraping off pine needles with a snow shovel. Below, an old garden hose snakes across the knobby dirt, its pinhole leak shooting up a spray that fizzes in a slash of sunlight. There's a breath of wind, a commotion in the lilacs. Down the lane, stones are finally warming in their sockets. Between branches, she can see the water tower on Buffalo Hill, the long gravel slide below the golf course, the blinding curlicues of the river.

Eva appears on the walk, church-dressed. "What's this?" she says, squinting. "You're not ready?"

"Not going," Laurel calls down. "Which I *told* you."

"Well, I guess I just don't believe that."

"Believe it. It's too fine a day."

"After all Mrs. Proctor did for you."

"I'm a rat," Laurel says.

Eva's car—a balky, inherited Buick—is in the shop again, so she is obliged to take Laurel's silver-flecked Prelude. She wiggles in, makes a fine show of adjusting the mirrors and the seat, angling the wheel down, as if Laurel were grotesquely outsized. The lane is just dry enough to send up a thin slipstream of gumbo dust that lazes off into the milkweed as she drives away. Go, *go*, Laurel thinks, and once Eva is safely out of sight she claps her hands on her jeans and makes for the ladder. It is a fine day. Her heart is rushing with mischief.

Routinely called the Mahugh sisters, they are, in fact, sisters-in-law. Eva was a Bean, married to Laurel's younger brother Eddie. People often take Eva for the older of the two, when, in fact, Laurel is fifty-six, and Eva, who has the raddled face of an ardent smoker, has just reached fifty. Laurel is the less familiar figure in town; before her return, three years ago, she had spent almost thirty years overseas. She was a civil-service employee with the Air Force, posted mainly in the Far East. She has a rangy, uncomplaining body, and a bantering way men have been drawn to (though not, as it's turned out, for long). But she's had a life, seen a good many things. In Manila, she once watched the head of a young man being carried on the point of a stick down a honeycomb of tiny, sweltering streets. "His eyes were wide open," she later reported to Eva. "You felt he was going to hurl words at you. Oh, and just imagine what they'd be!" Eva waves away such stories, as if they're spurious, told for the sake of shocking her. "That's just your mean streak talking," she sometimes says.

The other Mahughs—two brothers, another sister—have blown to the four winds, Eva says. By this she means: Billings, Casper, Wenatchee. Eva and Eddie stayed in town. For years, Eddie worked under his father, old Warren Mahugh, at Equity Supply, and after Eddie's mother passed away he and Eva sold their place and moved back into his parents' house to look after Warren. Laurel may have seniority, but Eva has lived under this roof with a husband, which must count for something. She was the one who nursemaided Laurel's father—he was diabetic, nearly blind, and full of staunch, gloomy ideas. Did she ever gripe in public, ever shirk, ever lose patience? Each fall, she'd catch herself thinking, Now, he can't last another winter, can he? and hate herself. Finally, one February, he did die. "Oh, I know how you must feel," she told Eddie, but that wasn't true—she didn't have any idea.

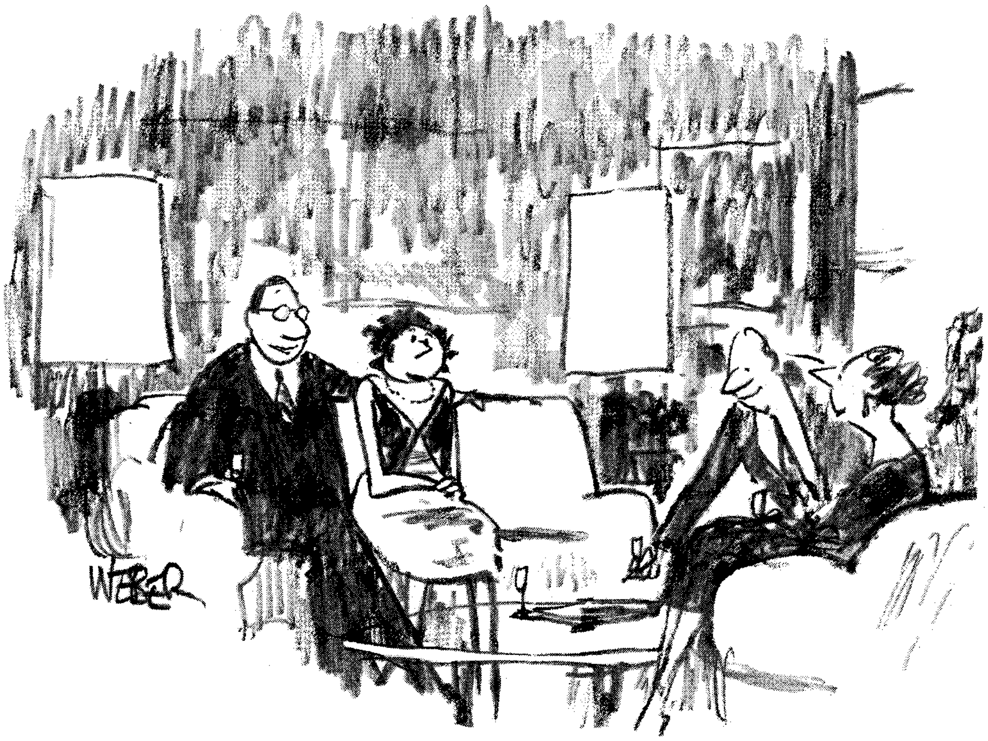
She and Eddie were alone in the house then. What *she* felt was a joy laced with dread. She thought Eddie might bloom, with Warren out of his way, but he seemed, if anything, quieter—a nearly middle-aged man with a long, sombre face roughed up each morning by a razor. She waited, she watched him. He was so familiar. He was always checking on things, giving his odd sighs, his barely audible status reports. But he didn't seem to have anything you could think of, really, as desires. "Would you want to take a little trip?" Eva asked him. He didn't think so. Summer came and passed, cool and rainy, hardly any respite at all. "What can I do for you?" she would ask. "What is it you want?" No, she never quite forced it out of him.

One morning that fall, he [illegible]d her he'd be hunting over west of Swain's Creek. "Who with?" she said, surprised. He'd skipped the last few seasons, and she thought he'd lost the taste for it.

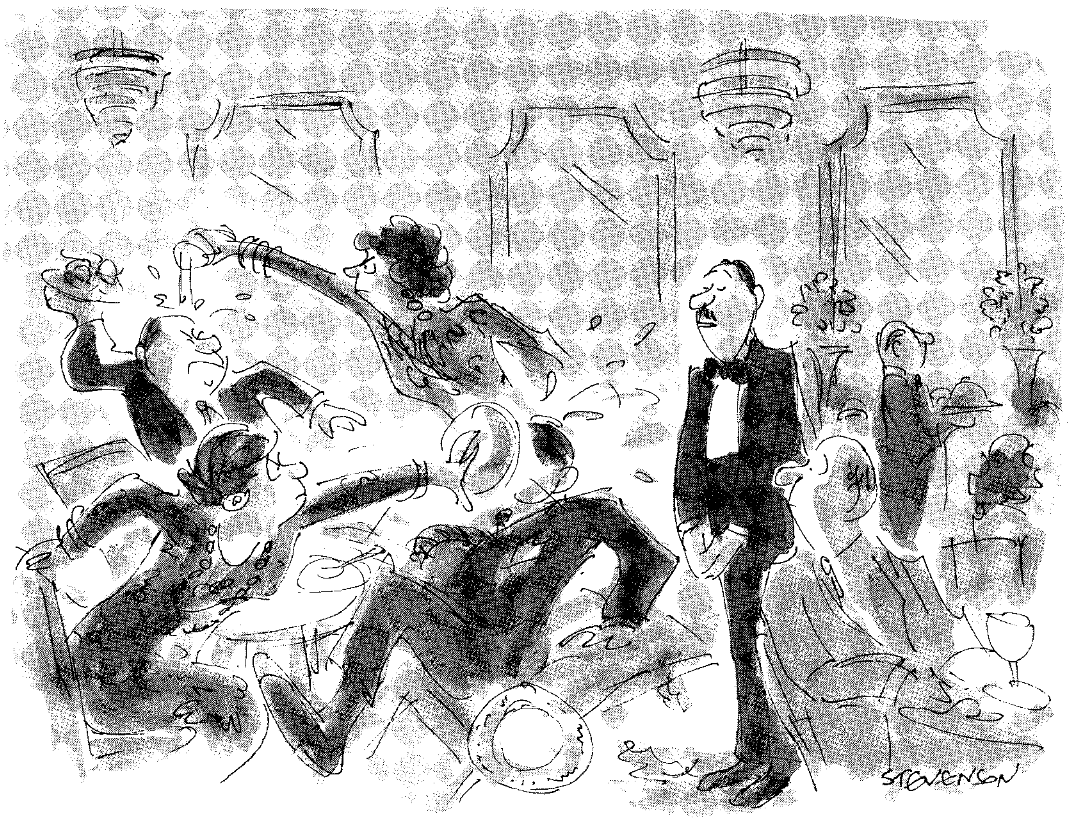
"No one," he said.

"Is that a good idea?" she asked him.

"I don't see that it matters," Eddie said. That was his valedictory. They found him barely half a



"I'm not an emotional person myself. Fortunately, Georgine feels things for both of us."



"How is everything?"

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mile from the truck, seated under a balsam, his gun barrel resting on the front of his jacket, and his head blown to nothing. The jacket had once been Warren's.

"Had he been acting funny?" the sheriff asked Eva.

"No, no. I can't help you," she said. "Go away."

"Mrs. Mahugh . . ." The man looked exhausted, standing in the kitchen doorway, tapping his hat against his pants leg. But he did go away after a while. It occurred to her later that maybe he wanted her to beg: *Oh, God, no—he must have fallen; he must have tripped over something.* . . . But Eddie was never clumsy, never careless.

Laurel had been posted on Guam, and by the time she could get home, Eddie had already been buried. "She couldn't wait one more day?" Laurel asked, incredulous at the news. "God, that woman—"

One of her brothers took her shoulder. "Eva's awfully keyed up," he said. "You know how she gets."

It was sleeting. Laurel had been travelling two nights, sitting up in rancid clothes. Someone gave her a drink, a plate of cold chicken. Eva had locked herself in her room. The next morning, Laurel drove up to the cemetery alone, and walked through the slop of horse-chestnut leaves. There were her parents, Warren and Grace. There was Eddie, first of the next bunch. "What are you *doing* here?" she asked him, furious. Eddie made no more of an answer than he would have alive.

Laurel stood in the wind, bareheaded, stubbing her toe against the chunks of brown sod. They'd been conspirators, she and Eddie, born fifteen months apart, both of them long and thin. Each had Warren's hatchet nose and faint, almost colorless hair. As they grew up, Eddie taught her solitary tricks he'd learned—how to hot-wire the truck, how to hypnotize a chicken with a penlight. Later on, Laurel taught him dirty limericks (though Eddie would surely never pass them along), and got him to undo his top shirt button and use a little after-shave, and not act so cowed. "Cheer up, Eduardo," she told him. "You can be sweet, girls like a sweet boy." But Eddie didn't cheer up. The muted, flinching part of him took over. Laurel left town. In California, she went to night school and worked days for a shipping company. When Eddie eventually graduated, she phoned him long-distance. "Come and see the ocean," she offered. He sounded enormously far away. "Who knows," he said, "I might just do that." But Laurel knew he never would. A year later, she passed her Civil Service test—she was in Okinawa. Had she run out on him, abandoned him? She wrote to him now and then, but finally gave it up—he never answered, what was the use? Eva sometimes wrote to her—airmail letters full of dull, dutiful goings on. Eddie moved through them like a stick man.

Laurel had just put in for retirement when the cable reached her in Guam. She was camped out in her flat, waiting for the paperwork to clear, waiting for something new—which turned out to be housekeeping, back home. She had no intention of staying on in Montana, much less with Eva. Good Lord, what an arrangement. But by the end of the second week, the rest of the family had scattered. Eva was a mess. Untranquillized, she sobbed in place. Dosed, she strayed—Laurel found her on the stairs, cheek pasted to the wallpaper, and another day out in the loft of the shed going through boxes of machine parts.

"God only knows how I'm going to manage all this," Eva said.

Laurel didn't reply. But didn't she, somehow, offer those mealy-sounding words Eva required? Didn't she handle the bank, didn't she fix the first hundred suppers and endure their consumption, didn't she find somebody to cart off Eddie's drill press and the ancient Willys he'd had up on blocks near the chicken yard, not to mention six pairs of curly-soled boots loitering in the vestibule?

The house has gray-shingled walls, and stands alone at the top of the property. Pinewoods rise in back, alfalfa stretches south to the road. A few ravaged plum and crab-apple trees cling to the lumpy hillside. Mainly, it's a big, dark place, with a cluttered, wraparound closed-in porch. The "catchall," Laurel calls this, "the outdoor closet." It reeks of lacquer dust and creosote and ancient bug killers; its windows are like the bottom of an old baking dish. The house is further obscured by six towering blue spruce trees, installed by Warren Mahugh himself in the spring of 1929—a gift to his new wife, Eva reminds people. They're historic, symbolic of love: grand, sheltering trees. However, they were planted too close together and much too close to the house—it's as if he'd never envisioned them *growing*. The lower limbs have scrubbed the color from the shingles. The roots have infiltrated the foundation, the septic line, the flagstones in the walk. The trees drip sap, the needles clog the gutters and turn the soil too acidic for grass. They suffocate, Laurel says; they bury the household in an intractable gloom.

GLINT OF GOLD TOOTH IN A POORLY LIT KITCHEN

My father in a broth-stained undershirt
as he laughs weary in our weak-light kitchen

sounds like a mouse running—raspy chuckle,
fear scurry, grain of rice seized and bitten.

How small one life is, and how tightly
we hold on to it. But cancer (for example)

can grab life back, knot up a tumor fist
unremovable. What then must a person do?

Live smaller and smaller. Wash a bowl
as my father does, with a motion as of

panning for gold, glint in his mouth
as he peers down—not smiling, not grimacing—

into the water, dimmer and dimmer, knives at the bottom.

—Roger Fanning

• •

EVA has a headache, driving home. The spring sun is vicious—suddenly the world's all glass and stainless steel. The luncheon after Mrs. Proctor's service, held in a hot, fruity-smelling room, was thinly attended, and what could be said, really, about their old teacher Mrs. Proctor, years retired, her mind in tatters? We live too long, Eva thought, that's all there is to it. She finds herself staring, wishing for a beer. Just one, cold as a spike. Her head behind the car's visor, she is nearly to the top of the lane before she sees what has happened.

The trees have been cut down.

They're fanned out from the house, colossal green hulks stretching clear across the lawn. One has snapped off a section of rail fence, the top of another is curled awkwardly against the well house. The trunks have been cut into sections, and two are already limbed. There's a rusty, high-walled truck in the drive. Laurel is standing at the porch steps talking to a man kneeling by a red gasoline can. All this Eva sees in an instant. None of it seems remotely possible.

The man she recognizes as Ethan Wilder, a widower who lives down by the big curve, among a welter of vehicles and sloping outbuildings. She knew the wife a little from church—cancer of the ovaries, Eva recalls. He's wearing plastic goggles and a stocking cap and coveralls, woodchips from head to toe. He has grown a thicket of beard—that she notices, too.

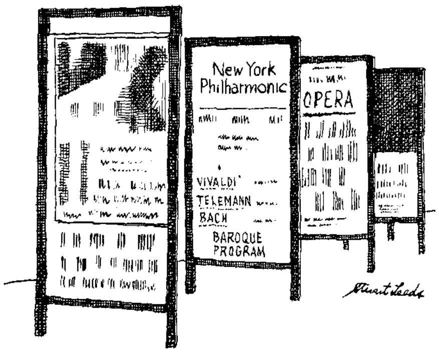
Laurel steps forward, arms spread wide. "Shoot me," she says. "I just made a decision. The day had come."

Eva is beyond speech.

Ethan, who has been about to resume the limbing, lets the chain saw hang in one hand, now perceiving what he has done. "Oh, now," he says. For all his size—his large shoulders and sloping belly—his movements seem gentle and precise.

Laurel touches one bare, sweaty forearm. "This will all be fine," she says reassuringly. "Really. Don't you worry."

Ethan draws back and tips his goggles up onto his forehead. "Mrs. Mahugh, now I never—" he says to Eva, but she is already striding off into the house. Laurel turns in time to see her kick nastily at the brick propping the porch door open. Ethan casts another look at the carnage. "I best leave this for today," he says. Moments later he rumbles away in the truck.



"THAT was the most *savage*—" Eva says.

"It wasn't either savage," Laurel says. "Such melodrama. You'd never do anything if it weren't for me."

Holding a dripping colander, she steps back from the sink window. "Look at the light in here," she says. The sky has gauzed over since midday, and the room is brandy-tinged, a tough light to nurse anger in.

Eva is still in her funeral outfit, though her earrings have been plucked off and deposited by the creamer. "I don't think I can eat," she says.

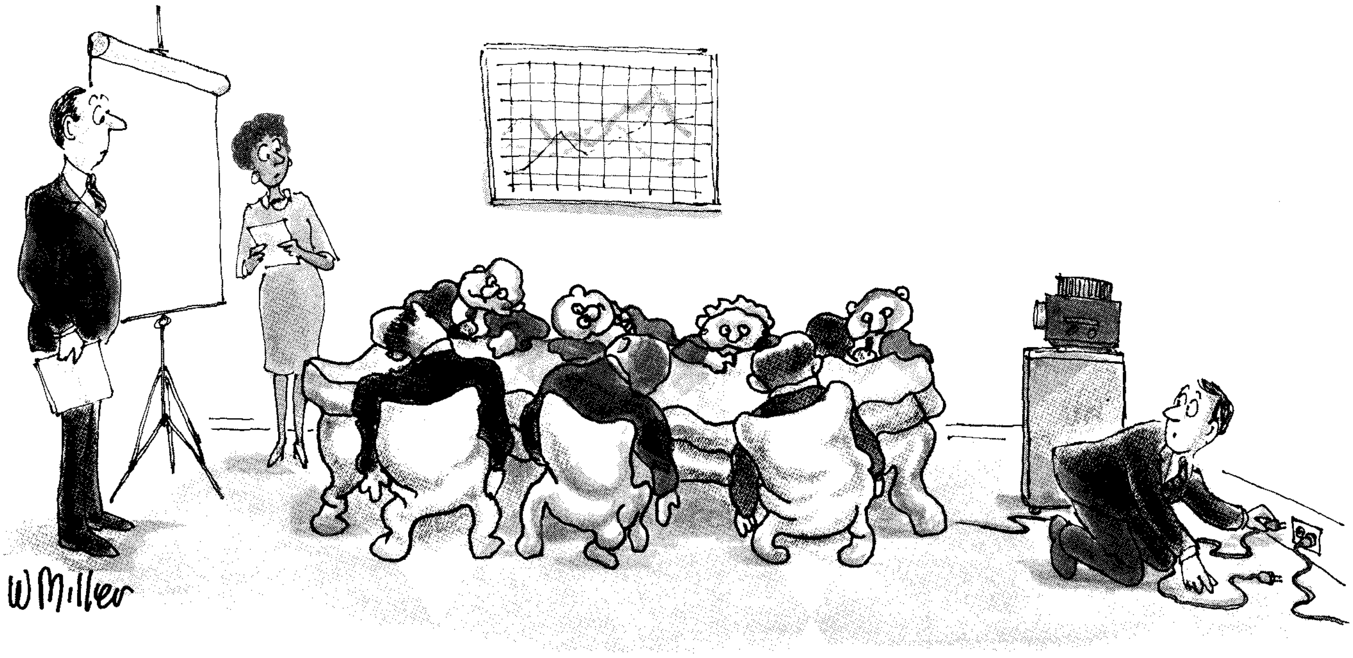
"You'll thank me, " Laurel says.

There had been a little modernizing after Eddie and Eva moved back in. Eddie lowered the ceiling and laid in new countertops, and now there is a freestanding dishwasher, with a chopping board on top. But the cupboards are old, with chipped glass pulls, and the deep old porcelain sink remains, with a swan's-neck faucet and squeaky taps. Things clatter in this kitchen, voices carry.

"As God is my witness," Eva says, but no threat follows, and there's nothing, really, to suggest that God is going to make her vindication His special project.

"Have a glass of beer," Laurel says.

"I saw your eyes," Eva says. "There was *glee* in them."



"Oops! Wrong plug."

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"That's me. Lover of life."

It's going on midnight when Laurel finally slides under the covers in the downstairs bedroom. She lies on her back, savoring the cold sheets. There's a Walkman under her pillow, playing some Charlie Parker. She has no intention of sleeping yet. The screens are on, and the night enters deliciously, molecule by molecule. The music is dazzling, druggy. Her last conscious thought is she'd bet money Eva is upstairs in her cane rocking chair, with the lights out, smoking.

And so she is. Eddie had told Eva, years ago, never to smoke in bed. "Promise me!" he insisted. As a boy, he'd seen the Saxon Hotel fire downtown—six bodies laid out on the sidewalk under sheets. So Eva promised, continues to promise. She sits in the dormer, rocking. With the storms off, the night makes noise again—it's as if her ears have popped. But there's none of that rustle, that *sh-shushing* against the roof peak.

One spring, she remembers, crows took to the spruce, nasty braying things. She had sent Eddie out to scare them off, at five-thirty in the morning. He fired his shotgun in their vicinity—even in full daylight, you couldn't see them back in the branches. The crows flapped off, six or eight of them, heading toward the Mastersons' hayfield. But they were back the following morning, racketing, voices like hacksaws. Eddie slept on—soft simple sleep—he never dreamed, so he said (and never smelled unpleasant next to her, she remembered, only a little stale and sugary). She poked him, made him go out again in his bathrobe and spray more shot up at the crows. He stood back by the well house, a gray figure in the early light. Cones and needles rained down, but no dead crows. Eddie came back to bed. She thanked him, and he said, "Now, don't *thank* me, Eva," and went straight to sleep again, as if he'd been switched off. The next morning they went through the same drill. On the fourth day of it he said in that resigned way of his, "Eva, you're going to have to just put up with it." And so she had. June and July passed, and then the crows were gone, as if they'd been a black mood she'd outlived.

DRIZZLE in the A.M.

Laurel has her coffee in peace. Eva is off at church—this churchgoing is spotty, Laurel has noticed; not a response to guilt but to the creep of chaos. And Eva had to ask Laurel for the car again. "No sweat," Laurel said. "And why don't you gas it up while you're at it." Didn't *that* frost Eva.

Ethan Wilder is supposed to return after lunch, with his boys, but Laurel imagines that's off. The sound yesterday, that was what surprised her. The ground shaking—a great *whump*—made her jump straight in the air. She stood off to the side, awaiting the next. *Whump!* She shouted at him, her heart racing, but he couldn't hear over the saw.

Laurel carries her coffee out the side door. The stumps are oozing. Cones and debris everywhere. She steps back into the grass, getting her feet wet, looking at the house. It needs paint desperately. Maybe she'll have the porch ripped off, a deck put on, some latticework. But it looks naked now—tall and wan, an embarrassing old thing. The soffits are dry-rotted, the shingles are heaped with moss, and where they're not, they're thin as scales.

LAUREL was right about Ethan Wilder. Kept his distance all day Sunday, letting the dust settle. Monday, her lilac suit out of dry dock again, she is back at work. She has her pension—decent, actually—but a few months of living with Eva made her hustle a job downtown in a den of lawyers. Shirtliff, the senior partner, stops before her desk this morning, red-cheeked, unsticking filaments of sweaty white hair from his forehead. He's found the sacrament of walking, pounds out the miles swinging little nickel-plated hand weights. "And how's your liver and lights?" he asks.

Laurel has her reputation in this office: utterly proficient, immune to the ordinary tomfoolery, a gamer. "Couldn't be finer," she answers, stretching, mock-languid. Shirtliff smiles, showing teeth. Later, she can hear him humming a bit of sad, lilting melody: "The days be fast a-wasting, and all the fair maids . . . something something." But nothing engages her today. Her mind idles, slips off into the sounds of traffic, the moseying of the dusty air. She finds herself in imaginary conversation—not with Shirtliff but with Ethan Wilder. She is smelling the pitch again, breathing the blue exhaust from the chain saw. She almost calls him, then laughs at herself—*You old bird*. At five, she gets into her car, finds it still reeking of Eva's mentholated smoke. She downshifts at the railroad crossing, and is startled again at how the house sits up at the top of the fields, so *exposed*. Then, roaring up the lane, she sees that the truck has come and gone, carrying away branches. Only the trunks remain, like fallen columns.

By Tuesday night, the trunks have been cut into stove rounds and stacked against the wire fence of Eddie's chicken run. A huge amount of wood—they'll be burning it winter after winter. The grass is muddy now, tracked by chunky tires and boot heels, but there's been an attentive raking. All that's left is eight or ten small mounds of needles and sticks waiting to be picked up. Tuesday is one of Eva's nights to cook. Supper appears at six o'clock straight up (even this is a concession, Eva insists—Eddie never could wait *that* long). And here it is: skinned chicken, steamed limas, Minute Rice and pimento. Monkish portions. There's been a realignment of the kitchen table: Laurel's chair now faces the sun. She smiles; this is nothing. "They make handsome blinds these days," she says. "Little slats—*louvres*."

"Why don't you go ahead and start," Eva says from the stove, seeing that Laurel, as usual, hasn't bothered to wait. Finally Eva sits, gets up for the lemon pepper, sits again.

"Any sweets?" Laurel asks.

"You know better than to ask," Eva says.

"Still peeved, are we?"

Eva looks at her, fork raised. "You make everything . . ." she begins.

What's the word she will light on? *Petty*? *Squalid*? Say it, Laurel thinks. Render judgment. But Eva fills her mouth with rice. Laurel watches the muscle in her jaw pumping, pumping, raising a knob of shadow.

WEDNESDAY the stumps are gone. Ethan had explained before he'd made the first cut that ordinarily he'd yank them with his tractor and a tow chain. But there was a good chance—old as they were, and possibly grown into the stonework—that he might have to dose them with ROT-X and let them molder. "Or you could leave them be. Some do," he said. "If it was me, I'd want them gone."

And so they are gone, like huge wisdom teeth. The holes are filled in with dark, peaty loam—so fine-grained it must have been sifted through a screen. Now it's been seeded and tamped and sprinkled.

Eva seems brighter that night. Lacks the stuff for holding a deep grudge, Laurel imagines.

By Thursday evening, Eva's car has been restored to service, and she's out in it, apparently. Laurel, home from work, scans the counter for a note, sees none. She changes, and then roams the downstairs, awash with energy. She fixes a drink and takes it to the front steps. It's not quite warm enough to sit out. Nevertheless, she sits, stretching her legs, lightly goosebumped. The sun is shouldering down through a ledge of cloud, striking the mountains across the valley pink. The pink of candy hearts, she thinks—of undercooked pork.

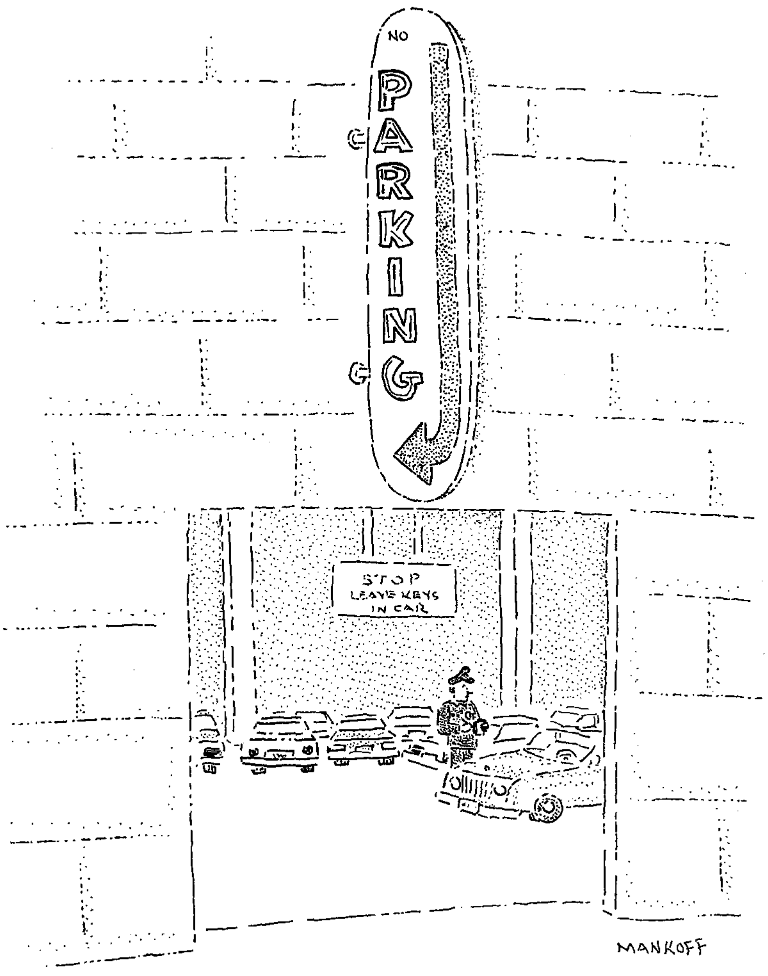
Up the lane, a moment later, lumbers Ethan Wilder's truck. He descends gingerly from the cab.

"You're an artist," Laurel says, waving her hand at the neat, bare earth.

This embarrasses him—not what she had in mind at all. She touches his chest. "No, look how you've opened it all up—you have no idea the gloom we had here."

But he won't look at his handiwork. He's not in work clothes, either. He's wearing chinos, a checked shirt with a brass-tipped string tie, clean boots. The panels of cheek above his whiskers have a shine.

What's going on? Is



ENTRAPMENT OR WHAT?

she supposed to offer him something? A beer?

"Well," she says. "I expect you'd like to get paid."

"Eva's not here?"

"Actually not," Laurel says brightly.

But there's a moment's sag in his shoulders, a settling of his substantial weight—she catches it. "Would you give her a message?" he asks. "Say . . ." But no, it's apparently not anything he can put into words.

THE hayfields brighten, the days stretch out, a frail green haze begins to obscure the topsoil along the foundation. Evenings, Ethan Wilder becomes a common sight at the Mahugh house. He listens to Laurel's notions about the renovation, stands outside with her, looking where she points, offers the occasional "Uh-huh, uh-huh, don't see why not," and gets up and measures possible openings. But Eva is nearby, wearing Bermudas and a jaunty navy-striped blouse. She's had her hair hennaed. Furthermore, she's begun to take an interest in the remodelling.

"What do you think about skylights?" she asks Ethan one night. "Wouldn't they be, oh, I don't know, kind of—"

"Stimulating," Laurel says.

Eva coils, but then says, "Yes, I guess that is what I meant."

Of course, the only place you could stick a skylight in an old frame house like theirs is Eva's room, still called—cloyingly, Laurel feels—the master bedroom.

"You don't fool a soul," she tells Eva when they're alone again.

"You can't pick a fight with me," Eva replies.

"No, really. Anybody could see what you were up to out there."

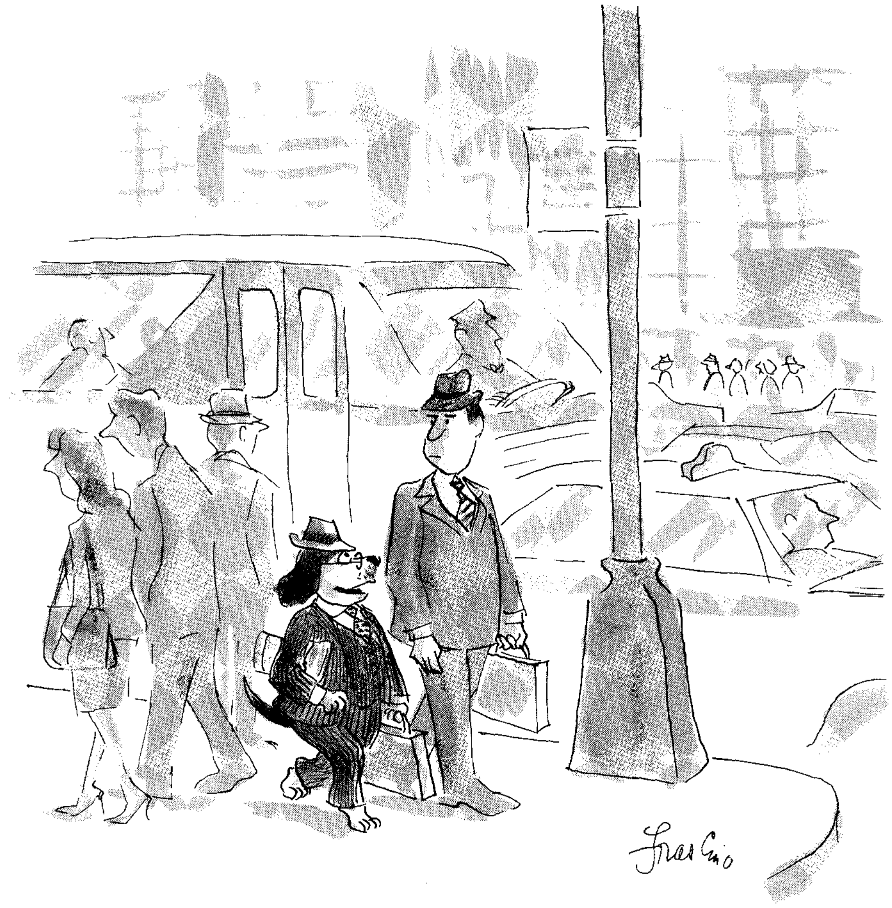
Eva stubs out her Kool and gets up. "Won't take the bait," she says.

ON July Fourth it comes up rain. "Further evidence God isn't a working stiff," Laurel says.

No rise out of Eva.

"We were wondering," Eva says, later that day—*we:* she and Ethan, there it is—"if you wanted to come down to the lake and see the fireworks with us."

"You're kind," Laurel says. "But I don't believe I'll be able to squeeze that in."



"I started out carrying his newspaper and fetching his slippers. Then, gradually, I began assuming more and more responsibilities."

• •

Eva waits by the door, watching the lane, fiddling with her rain hood. "Well, you were invited," she says. "So you know."

Laurel shakes her head. "Look at you," she says.

"I look fine. There's nothing wrong with me."

Lord, what have I wrought? Laurel thinks, once they're gone, but it's not a thought she can bear. The house feels clammy—no place to be. She grabs her jacket finally, and drives to the movies, and by the time they're out, the rain has all but quit. She has that flushed, stupid feeling. She sweeps her hand through the beaded water on the car's roof, splashing some down into the neck of her shirt. *What now?* She swings out onto Montana Street, thinking maybe the Dairy Queen, then doesn't stop after all. She veers down through town—*cutting the gut,* isn't that what they used to call it? The lights smear by, packs of tiny fireworks dance and spit in the limited darkness. The traffic curls around the courthouse, low-slung cars like hers, thick with kids, but when they begin to turn out and loop back she goes straight and finds herself alone on the road, fighting back a sudden weakness of heart. She turns onto McCandlish, and takes the long way, past the orchards and the horse pastures, and, for no good reason, past Ethan Wilder's. The house is flanked by a woodlot, down out of the wind. All she's ever seen of it is the spidery antenna coming off the steel roof.

She makes the big curve and crests the hill and pulls off the road there, where she can see the whole lower valley, down to the north end of the lake. The sky is low and empty—nothing but black-bottomed cloud, and an occasional minor rocket launched from a boat. Cars are streaming away from the landing—they're backed up a mile at the cutoff to town.

Laurel stands breathing the wet air. Spectacle's over, she thinks.

Next morning, everything lies under a heavy mist. The Mastersons' sheep bleat in the distance. Ethan and his two boys arrive. "Boys"—they are twenty-five and twenty-eight, with tool belts and thermoses, and long glossy muscles extending from their shirtsleeves. Laurel moves past them, looking each one in the eye. She hands Ethan a square of paper with her work number. "Look, now call me if there's *anything*—I mean it," she says. She's galled at the idea of Eva presiding.

Shirtliff is out of town, and the younger men in the office are grumpy from the long weekend. Laurel forgoes lunch downtown and guns the car home, squinting fiercely. The air is glazed with light now, as the fog tries to burn off.

And yes, the porch roof has gone. The stained, rattling old porch windows are stacked on the truck bed, and the stud walls have been bared. Ethan's two boys are crouched in the wreckage, wolfing sandwiches and swilling cartons of milk. Ethan sits with his back to the shakes, legs splayed, slicing apple and cheese. Eva is standing before them, with her hands stuffed in her sweater pocket. "Can't I get you something else?" she asks Ethan.

"Don't hover, Eva," Laurel says.

Ethan collapses his little knife and gets up. "Can't pack it away like I used to," he says pleasantly. The boys yawn and rise. The wrecking bars come out again. Eva trails after Ethan, stepping anxiously, as if the ground were mined. Just beyond the new grass, he stops by a pair of sawhorses and begins jerking nails from the salvaged wood. An easy, practiced motion, a brief wincing sound.

This can't possibly last, Laurel thinks.

In the next days, posts are sunk, cedar decking creeps around the side of the house, and a sliding glass door goes in. Huge, immaculate Thermopanes replace the stingy downstairs windows. Foam is blown into the walls, and one of the boys spends a morning on a stepladder tapping new shakes into place. Ethan is careful to ask Laurel, "How's this look to you now? This pretty much how you had it pictured?"

"Yes, it seems perfectly—" Laurel says. But what? For all the pointing and talking out loud, she hardly had it *pictured* at all. Wasn't it more a craving? Light! Air!

At last, one of the boys—Martin, the lankier, unmarried one—climbs onto the main roof and saws out a long rectangle of shingle and planking as, inside, Laurel watches Ethan cut away plaster and lath and rafters. Eva has smothered everything with sheets. The dust flies everywhere, swirling in with the fresh air. The other boy, Walt, has taken the truck down to pick up the skylight. He's the younger, more subdued one, with an oily-faced, hugely pregnant wife. Something about him reminds Laurel of Eddie: the way he turns away as he's spoken to, expecting blame.

Now he's back from Sperry Glass, empty-handed. "Sent the wrong size," he reports.

"Cripes!" Ethan says, the most violent display of temper Laurel has yet seen out of him. "How long'd they say?"

The boy shrugs, starts explaining: the manager wasn't in, there was a question about who'd actually written down the measurements, the company is clear back in *Toledo* . . .

Ethan puts a hand up. "Run and get me that roll of VisQueen," he says. "The black."

Walt removes himself, dodging past Laurel in the doorway. Ethan wipes his eyelids with his thumbs and takes a slow breath, looking around at the white-draped room. *This is her bedroom,* his face says. *These are her things. . . .*

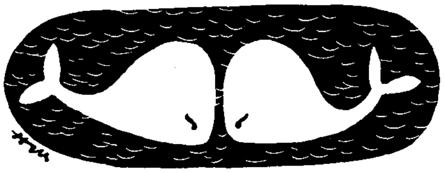
Eva is down on one knee, collecting chunks of plaster in a dustpan. "Eva?" he says, hesitating, then touching her shoulder. "*Eva.* I'll get that."

THIS, as it turns out, is the first night Eva fails to come home. It's Saturday noon before she surfaces. Laurel is picking at leftovers in the kitchen. "I was this close to calling out the gendarmes," she announces.

Eva gives her that look, her minute tremor of disapproval. "I don't believe that for a second," she says. "You knew where I was."

Laurel scrapes her chair back and slides the rest of her lunch into the compost. "Aren't you something," she says.

Eva sets down her bag, a little green canvas thing with a strap, digs into the pie saver for a fresh pack of Kools, and rips into them. "I'm a perfectly ordinary person," she says. "With ordinary needs. I have no pretensions to the higher life."



Without meaning to, Laurel laughs.

Eva turns. "I know what you're going to try next and you can save your breath," she says.

"What? Tell me."

Eva's eyes burn. "I will not have you spoiling this," she says.

"Now, why on earth would I want—" Laurel begins, by rote. But it's true, she was already casting about for some disparagement, some sly prediction.

"You've said the last hateful thing to me," Eva says, exiting, trailing smoke, her hips switching with vindication. Out into the dining room she goes, and up the stairs, *clip, clip.*

Water runs briefly in the pipes. The house settles into a heavy stillness and the minutes pass. Laurel's legs weave among the chair rungs. It's hot, finally, wilting hot, hot down into the earth.

Is she hateful? Is that all she is, another sour, disappointed soul?

There is at least this: she has held her tongue about Eddie. She has never once gotten into it with Eva, never pinned her down: *Tell me why a happy, married man, with a wife he adores, drives his truck forty miles back in the hell-and-gone and puts his shotgun in his mouth. Explain that away, Eva.*

There is no blaming Eva; there is no story, with its simple satisfactions, to badger out of her. Eva is as baffled as she is.

Laurel stands, unsticks the blouse from her stomach, and mounts the staircase, calling lightly from the landing, "Eva? Eva?" It will be miserable up on the second floor—hotter yet, stuffy, the stale air hardly stirring.

She touches Eva's door and it gives. There's an old-fashioned lacquered suitcase open on the bed, some white things folded inside, a camisole. But—it's crazy—Eva has gone to the opening in the roof and scissored a jagged, three-sided hole in the black plastic. She's on tiptoe, looking out, framed against the sky, with her dark head of hair blowing. From the back and below, she looks as if she might begin to rise and disappear. Laurel has to wonder, just for a minute, if she will hold her down.
—DAVID LONG

ANNALS OF ART

DUNGEON MASTERS

IN 1976, the painter R. B. Kitaj coined the expression "School of London," which ended up confusing a great many people. The occasion was a show titled "The Human Clay," which he organized at the behest of the British Arts Council for a public gallery in London. In considering this commission he informed the council that he felt himself "a poor judge of abstraction" and so would prefer to limit his selection to pictures of people; he then composed a catalogue essay that briefly set forth what he regarded as the enduring claims of figurative art. The show itself gave rise to a number of disputes. There were the predictable complaints about who had or hadn't been included, and the understandable reservations about whether figure drawing should be accorded so central a place in the artistic life of the capital. The chief bone of contention, however, was over the "school" that Kitaj had assembled in his essay—a personal selection of artists who had chosen to live in the city—and almost at once his coinage was subjected to a barrage of semantic quibbling which has not ceased to this day. Wearisome debating points abounded. Did all the members of the School of London have to represent a similar philosophy? Was the School of London a rival to the New York School, or the principal heir to the School of Paris? Did it advocate, like the schools of the Italian Renaissance, some particular sort of coloring or composition? And what about David Hockney, a Londoner who now spent most of his time in California, or Kitaj himself, who was so deeply American that almost no trace of a local accent could be detected in his work? Were they true members of the School of London? The continuing controversy has left Kitaj in a state of bemused frustration. "To my way of thinking," he once told me, "any city that has a number of serious artists working in it at the same time may be said to have a 'school'—it's just that most of these schools don't attract notice."

All the arguments about the so-called School of London and its putative members load the dice: they depend on one's definition of the term. Yet most of the more eminent painters of the older generation do share certain circumstances and habits of thought. The art life of London is a matter not only of achievements and failures but also of attachments and habits, of hatreds and vices, of contagious obsessions and public-house fiefdoms. Where things are—the geography of art—can be as important as what they are. Colleagues live separated by daunting distances, in a far-flung accretion of urban villages so dissimilar and introverted that they had no common electrical current until well within living memory. Chelsea, Hampstead, Camden Town, Islington, Bloomsbury, Whitechapel and the East End, Soho and its onetime northern extension, Fitzrovia—each name offers a distinct bouquet of artistic associations. It may be that to speak of a central group of London artists is to knuckle under to journalistic oversimplification, to capitulate to just the sort of boosterism that these artists themselves despise. There is little difference, though, between the perception of influence and influence itself, and in this sense a few painters remain paramount. With Hockney gone, Francis Bacon reigns, the dirty granddad of British art; Lucian Freud has acquired a reputation as our time's foremost observer of the human countenance; Frank Auerbach, Leon Kossoff, Michael Andrews, and Howard Hodgkin have all won considerable attention for achieving some sort of personal expression within the traditional medium of paint on canvas or panel.

These artists have a long and complex history of acquaintanceship. One's eyes linger over the famous photograph of Bacon, Freud, Auerbach, and Andrews drinking champagne at Wheeler's, in Soho. They look like mates on a spree, but it seems that the shot was contrived and they never composed a cohesive social set. Nowadays, these old acquaintances seem to be travelling steadily away from one another, like galaxies in the cosmos. Though they never congregate, they all keep in touch with certain people (one of them is Catherine Lampert, the director of the Whitechapel Art Gallery), and a few old ties have remained unbroken. Freud no longer sees Bacon, but Auerbach does see Freud; Kossoff, who went to art school with Auerbach, still cherishes a great admiration for his old comrade, though he has tired of the fruitless comparisons that people are always making between their very different kinds of work. A good book remains to be written about the London world of painting since 1945; its author would have to be some snoop in his seventies who never missed a party in his life. This imaginary chronicler would have to take into account the change in British sexual mores after the war, and the resultant emergence of homosexual culture heroes, like Bacon and John Minton. He would have to explain the persistence of an archaic bohemian outlook, the often squalid living conditions, and the utter contempt for self-promotion, journalism, and vogue. He would have to clarify the territorial impulse—the way proprietary sentiment condenses around St. Paul's, or the docklands, or the obelisk at Mornington Crescent—and

A WEDDING STORY

It was clear, sunny, and cold in New York
The day in November my sister,
Who was, after all, twenty-two,
Finally got married.
Just before the ceremony, Oswald was assassinated.
The TV was on as we left the house,
So we watched him get shot.
Then we drove off to the wedding.

There in the hall my grandfather sat
Muttering in a morose coat.
My father's good wool suit needed pressing,
And he'd forgotten his belt.
My mother was stacked into a gold dress.
Aunt Sylvia wore black.
Lynn, the bride, quivered in blue shantung.

With the Reform ceremony our side wasn't at home.
But Aunt Sylvia, my father's sister, wailed in Yiddish,
High and sweet, nodding and swaying,
Until all our valves were opened and lubricated.
Sylvia danced with my mother,
Ancient enemies musically moving,
Black and gold.
Following the armistice,
Everyone cheered and charged the buffet and ate gigantically.

When the dance band went at it,
Loud and Latin,
Aunt Sylvia sank her claws into my sleeve and spoke:
"Frankly, I don't feel normal.

• •

he would have to tell us why it is that the cult of *pourriture noble*, or noble rot (grapes bursting on the vine, pheasants going high, titled belles in the spoilage of middle age), still has such a firm grip on certain imaginations. He would also have to point out that the ranks of the London painters are ruled over not by living people but by a few paintings in public collections whose authority no one gainsays. Such pictures—among them the Poussins and Titians in the National Gallery—exert an almost talismanic attraction: there is a general belief in the spiritual power of flesh painting, a sense that any new finding about the figurative potential of oil paint is also a finding about flesh, about life.

Kitaj, the American, stands a little outside this milieu both in the nature of his painting, which has been more open to the winds of Paris and New York, and in his social position, which is that of the self-appointed guide. Like the dragoman waiting by the tourist steamer, he will take you to whatever you want to see, though always along the route that suits his own idiosyncratic purposes. He also likes to write and receive letters, and last autumn, when I often saw him in Chelsea, we would exchange wads of foolscap; he thought it perfectly natural to correspond with someone in the same city, or even in the next room. Some of his letters were very long, and I found myself rereading them as I rode around on the tube, scanning his tight handwriting for clues to his mood whenever I approached his stop. An excitable correspondent, Kitaj has a way of reaching for stylistic effects, yet his prose, like his accent, would be quite at home in Cleveland, Ohio, where he grew up. In a way, he isn't a Londoner. After years of living in Europe, he has never come to feel much at home anywhere, only a little more at home everywhere. He misses his friends, who are scattered all over, and he calls them often. He is planning to move away and planning to stay put.

"Un-at-homeness and assimilation don't marry too well," he confided in one of his letters. "The mixture has been explosive for me and my poor pictures. . . . I do like to watch people who are un-at-home. Is that not a possible subject or trait in pictures as in people? I don't leave London easily, nor do I stay here with any ease. . . . Bacon lives near me, and Freud not far away, and, yes, I feel the spirit, in my neck of London, of those American ghosts—Whistler, Sargent, James, Pound. Just before I arrived in England . . . I read Will Rothenstein's 'Men and Memories,' a very good chronicle of English art life, and I live in a sea of those blue plaques in my very streets—Turner, Whistler, Tonks, John, Steer, and all the others. Even Sickert opened his first art school in Chelsea, with Whistler as patron. But, no, I don't feel safe anywhere . . . maybe a *little* here"—"here" meant a table in his favorite café—"where I'm writing you."

I asked him once why he continued to live in England.

"Live in England?" he replied. "I haven't lived in the real England since I had a house in Dulwich Village. Then I had real English neighbors and my children went to real English schools. Now I don't know where I live, I really don't. I do like to work by the London light, though I'm not sure that explains anything. But I will admit that there is *something* in the air here. Bacon has been painting in the same room for over thirty years—a room so tiny it would fit in Julian Schnabel's bathroom. Freud and Kossoff and Auerbach have been in the same small rooms for years, working and working, rarely stopping. Auerbach's studio looks like a dungeon, with that one barred window way up near the ceiling. They hardly ever leave London—I don't think they often *cross* London. I have come to think—though with certain reservations—that the real divide in art is between mainstream artists and marginal artists, and that the mainstream has nothing to do with modernism or any other ism, but simply with paint. If it is true, as some people say, that any habit can become addictive, then the greatest of all addictions is to paint itself—to its colors, its consistencies, its smells, its drying times. The real mainstream painters may very well be the ones like Auerbach and Kossoff and

I've spent my years alone, divorced, and now I'm almost old."
Focussing on her wasn't easy.
She peered at the dancers like a perturbed parrot,
Each eye outlined with primitive intensity,
Her nose a paler hue than the rest of her tropical face.

Aunt Sylvia left early,
But before she was gone she modelled the full-length mink
She had bought, she said, just for this affair,
With money set aside from the years of her generous alimony.
Pointing to the coat,
And laughing tipsily toward his daughter, the bride,
Dad said to his new son-in-law,
"Make sure *she* gets one of those!"

"Let him lie in the earth where he belongs, for the sake of all Jews!"
My grandfather suddenly declared in Yiddish, referring to Oswald.
That really cleared the air
Of any lingering whiff of catastrophe.
The band began a hora,
Everyone rallied, forming one great circle,
In the center of which my father kicked
A kosatzke around my mother,
And in the center of the center
My mother shone and shook,
Wiggling her golden bottom,
Dancing off her goddam golden gong
While the whole wedding clapped
And jumped and carried on,
Beating the hell out of life
For the sake of the happy pair.

—Melvin Wilk

• •

Freud, who have completely given in to their addiction, who paint only in order to paint some more. I've lost that addiction myself. I used to have it, but I've lost it."

Kitaj is a man of middle height, fifty-eight years old, with a shock of nearly white hair, and high, almost Asiatic, cheekbones. His original name was Ronald Brooks; when he was nine, his mother married Dr. Walter Kitaj, a research chemist and a refugee from Hitler's Vienna. Before coming to London, in 1959, the younger Kitaj had been a seaman and a soldier, and had studied art in New York, Vienna, and Oxford. A thoroughly assimilated Jew, he took no great interest in his ethnic background until about 1970, but since then he has proclaimed himself a specifically Jewish artist, and his pictures have been tenanted by increasing numbers of Jewish refugees. In one large painting, now in the Tate, the artist has represented himself in a dream, recumbent before the entrance to Cecil Court; his brush has transformed this well-known alley of booksellers into a sort of émigré theatre, presided over by the late Mr. Seligman, an antiquarian bookseller of Central European extraction. Such displaced persons seem to embody the displacement of Kitaj's own thoughts, which range restlessly over London and the whole Western world, mixing up politics and baseball with countless spectres from old French and Italian art.

Kitaj first attracted notice in New York in the sixties, when Alfred H. Barr, Jr., bought a big canvas of his for the Museum of Modern Art, and he has remained loyal to the loose, subjective manner embodied in that picture. He uses collage and free association to coax his feelings into imagery, but he also defines that imagery with a brand of strong contour drawing which harks back to the Quattrocento. Over the years, both his wife, Sandra Fisher, who is a painter and an accomplished draftsman, and his close friend David Hockney have encouraged him to pursue his interest in figure drawing, at which he has come to excel. He is also an avid reader and bibliophile: he lives surrounded by tall bookshelves lined with volumes on art, iconography, literature, and philosophy, and he has developed a gaudily argumentative writing style of his own. He writes to defend life drawing, to champion artists whose work he likes, and also to explain, if that is possible, the "integrally Jewish" imagery of his own pictures. He likes to say that there are "moments where words flourish as secret agents for painting," an idea that offends those purists who believe that artists should refrain from interpreting their finished work; in reply, he will devote page upon page to a species of rambling and morbidly sensitive self-vindication. At times, he seems to be ambivalent about the very fact that his thoughts are private and inaudible: he is sociable to the marrow, and if he has an idea, he wants the world's reaction to it, though when the reaction comes and is perhaps less than welcoming he may be profoundly distressed.

Kitaj's painting has always looked unmistakably his, and perhaps out of the sheer abundance of his originality a spring of admiration flows: he plumps unstintingly for his colleagues' work. Some painters are grateful for his support, while others are merely embarrassed, but all agree that he is genuinely trying to be helpful. It is extraordinary how he refuses to permit anyone in his presence to criticize a painter whom he likes: this seems to pain or alarm him so much that he breaks in before the would-be critic can finish airing his opinion. Of course, one can read such advocacy as a form of patronization, just as one can read it as a plea for mutual aid, or as an attempt to turn London art society into an admiration bee. But at bottom it is probably just plain old Midwestern generosity, a sentiment that the English commonly fail to recognize.

Last autumn, Kitaj was recovering from a heart attack, and every now and then I would poke into a café he frequented in the Fulham Road, near Onslow Square, to see how he was doing. This café had Muzak, cane chairs, tables with plastic tops, ceiling fans, a framed glass advertisement for Dunville's, a neon Schlitz sign. It was a café like many the world over—not a home away from home but a place

Victoria Roberts

"Oh, just hanging out, reading the Upanishads."

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where anyone from anywhere could feel perfectly rootless and disoriented. In one corner was a blackboard scrawled with the day's specials, and under this board Kitaj could often be found, scribbling away on a yellow pad or sketching the other customers—"observing the un-at-home," as he might put it. Each time as I sat down I would tell him, quite truthfully, that he was looking a little better.

"Better? I feel finished," he would invariably reply. "Jesus, how can you say I look better? I don't understand how you can say a thing like that." But even as he spoke his face would brighten, and he would look up with those strange eyes of his, which seemed to have pupils like mismatched buttons, one slightly smaller than the other—the effect of dissimilar eyeglass lenses. Then he would slump back into a forlorn posture and work very slowly at his food. Having lost a lot of weight, as his doctors had ordered, he was swimming in the clothes of a former self, and was to all intents and purposes tethered to the Royal Brompton Hospital, a few blocks away, where he went for checkups. A strict regimen of exercise had set him circling through Chelsea several times daily, strengthening his heart tissue, building up his stamina, hoping to shake off a terrible despondency.

"I am going to retire," he announced to me one day over a plate of chicken salad. He seemed pleased to have hit on the idea. "Most people think that painters never retire, but some actually have, you know. And I'm not talking about some fifth-rate schmearers, either. La Tour retired, Cuyp retired, so why shouldn't I? I'm lost, I'm dead already. But here I go complaining again. Don't listen. I always blot my copybook, as the English say." His voice sank beneath the Muzak. Why, he wondered aloud—he was always brooding on this—did so many people reject his interpretations of his pictures? Why did they reject even the idea that he was entitled to offer such interpretations? Carefully, point by point, he explained to me the intentions behind his more recent paintings, until it began to seem that his very refusal to let go of them was the real content of his mental efforts.

One afternoon, after lunch in his café, we decided to run an errand or two in the neighborhood. Kitaj's part of Chelsea lies between the Thames and South Kensington Station, and whenever we went walking there we would forget why we had started out. The place itself (or was it the warm autumn light?) induced a sort of dreamy dislocation. We would wander in the shadow of cornices and crowstepped gables, trying to hold a course through what seemed a vast, scrambled atlas of ornament, until gradually our errands slipped our minds. The cafés, pubs, and bookshops, the bending streets that closed off any view of what lay behind or ahead—these seemed a way of saying that distraction itself might be the best reason for being there. Rows of identical Victorian façades resembled vertical moraines or upended brickfields, each one a jaunty tryout of some historicizing style; it was as if times and places were being whimsically whisked about.

We walked until we came to a handsome house in The Vale; it was empty, in the process of redecoration. The brickwork was nicely repointed and, to judge by its various colors, had recently been repaired. In front was a moss-covered annex that must once have been used as a studio, since its roof had a large skylight. "This is where Walter Sickert had his first school in London," Kitaj said. The soft sunlight played over the gardens that lay between Sickert's schoolhouse and the backs of the white terrace houses on Elm Park Road. Farther on, a round blue plaque announced, "This House Was Built for Augustus John." The little structure—a virtual cottage—had three dormer windows and a big chimney. Opposite was the house of A. A. Milne. "What's the name of this street, anyway?" Kitaj asked, looking about in a daze, though we were two blocks from his own house, where he had lived for twenty years.

Continuing our circuit, we passed a corner building with its angle sheared off, Paris-style, so that a narrow façade looked out obliquely onto the crossing. The little façade had one big window on the ground floor and one up above. A moat guarded by a high iron fence ran along the house. "Bacon had that once," Kitaj said, pointing toward a small studio just discernible inside the house. "Bacon used to acquire rooms, the way Sickert did. Sickert would get a room somewhere to put his etching press in, and then a room in some other street for painting the model, and then a third room in a square in some other part of town for doing something else—maybe near one of those music halls he was always sketching. Bacon would take rooms here and there, too, but, unlike Sickert, he'd never actually

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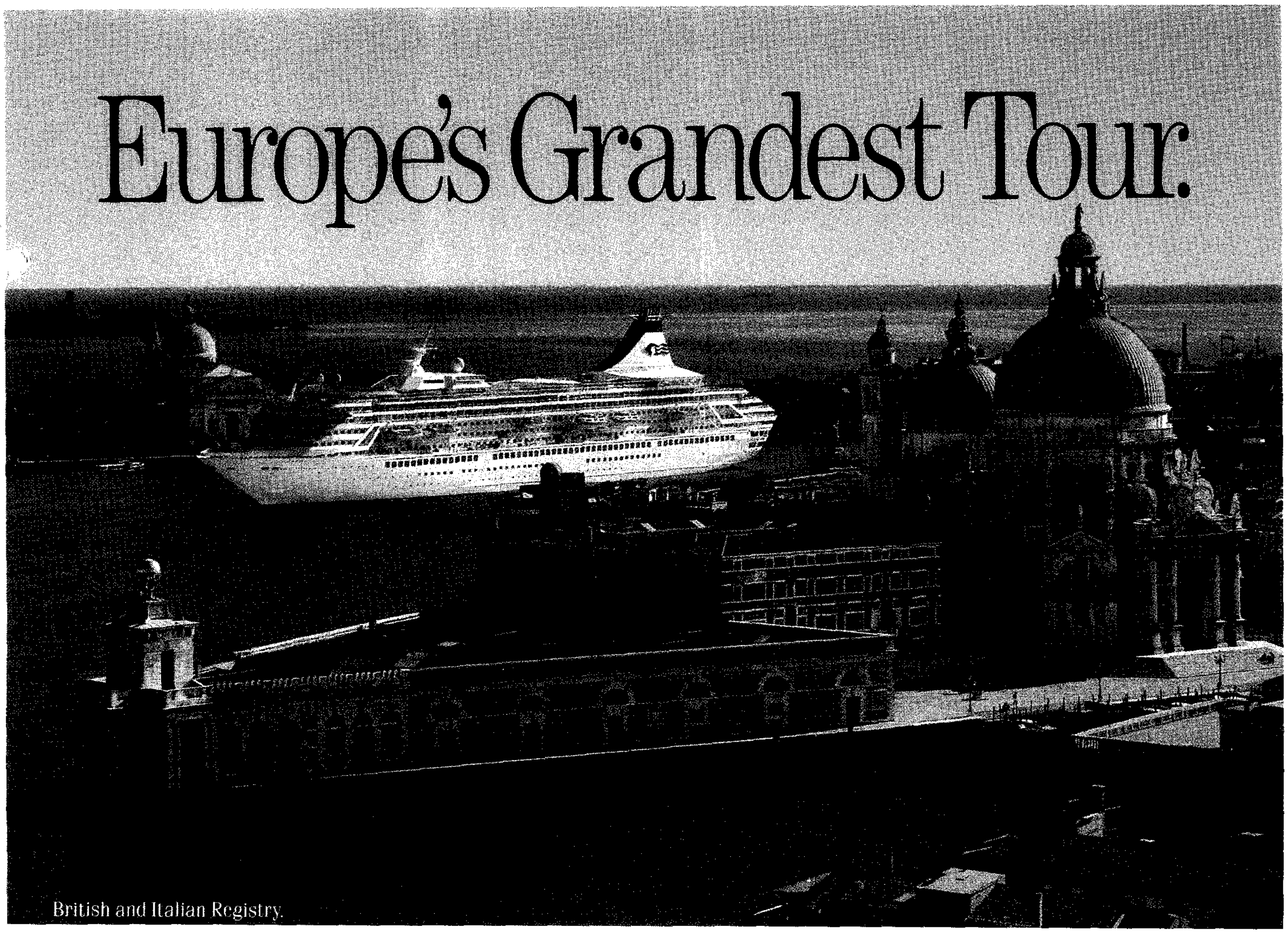

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use them, and they'd just stand empty."

We passed the house of William De Morgan, the Victorian ceramics man and novelist, which had a studio window in a notch between two squat towers. We passed the long white modern house that the German architect Erich Mendelsohn built for himself when he came to Britain in the thirties. We crossed the Fulham Road and then the Old Brompton Road. "Here, on this corner, is where I usually run into Bacon," Kitaj said. "At the age of eighty, he dresses as if he were going to a leather bar." We turned into a mews that looked newly spiffed up. "Bacon's door is open, so we won't go in," he said.

"Why not, if it's open?"

"It means he's working."

Once a place of rooming houses and crotchety old souls, Kitaj's borough of leafy streets and quiet gardens was by now an exclusive precinct. Most secretive of all were its great squares, with their full-crowned chestnuts and limes. Screened by hedges and low-springing boughs, and protected by tall, spiked grilles, they formed shadowy pastoral islets within the stream of the traffic. Sometimes, walking by one of these squares in a sunny spell between showers, we would catch sight of a keyholder in the exercise of his proprietary right. Slipping through a gate in the grille, the keyholder would lock it carefully behind him and disappear into the dripping glade. In a way, I began to think, the painters of London were like those keyholders, for each was ensconced in a place where no one could follow.

UNTIL around forty years ago, there was something oxymoronic, even to many British people, about the idea of a British pictorial art. As a distinct phenomenon, it came about very late, in the Georgian period, when a world of surpassing loveliness was already in place in the British Isles. This world consisted of architecture, furnishings, interior design, bookwork, and a species of idyllic landscape so deeply impregnated with human thought that Dryden's expression "conscious grottos" perfectly describes it. Most English art simply illustrates this realm, instead of embodying truths of its own, but much of it has great charm. The English understood Arcadia and its uses, both ideal and material; they reinvented the portrait, as they had reinvented biography; and they saw that animals were a suitable subject for high art. The problem was that each of these fascinations brought with it a certain peril. Portraiture, for example, which sprang from the British sense of the uniqueness of the individual, gave rise to a kind of radiative pictorial arrangement in which nothing but a single head might be of interest, and the British hypersensitivity to nature all but precluded that power of generalization, of willed abstract design, which had carried French art to predominance. Whereas the Frenchman, in Bonnard's famous phrase, was "heavily armed against nature," the Englishman often became a mere conduit for it. Yet the grandest English art always transcended those limitations, and in our own century they have burst altogether. This is largely the result of London's cosmopolitan composition: it is significant that the two artists chiefly responsible for introducing Continental painting ideas into Britain—Walter Sickert and David Bomberg—were both of foreign origin (respectively, Danish and Galician-Jewish).

What has come about in London since the war, however, is not really a variant of European modernism, and much of it remains profoundly alien to Americans brought up in the appreciation of classic Parisian art. London is a place of extreme privacy, and something of this has rubbed off on the local artists, who are often reserved, and even secretive. Whereas New York artists usually seem ready to assassinate their grandmothers to attract attention, their London counterparts tend to dodge the limelight and to regard even the briefest meeting with a client, curator, admirer, well-disposed journalist, or potential benefactor as a miserable penance. What the principal interpreter of contemporary English painting, Sir Lawrence Gowing, has written of Lucian Freud's working method might be applied to the practice of many others as well: that it has the character of a solitary and ravenous appetite. Subjects tend to be very personal, and as jealously possessed as a lover; high style is suspect, as if it were a form of vanity; good paintings are assumed to be the rarest of things, invariably rescued by their makers from the jaws of failure; and self-confinement in a tiny cell, perhaps before a single, compulsively reworked canvas, is a routine mode of existence. There is a high-minded crankiness to the whole mentality.

GOOD FOOD
Anne Burgess

This curious hair-shirt ethic derives in part from the remarkable example of David Bomberg: if there is such a thing as a London School, he would have to be seen as one of its precursors. Bomberg was not a great painter, but he was, as Kitaj once remarked to me, "the last major artist, or the last one we know of, to work in relative obscurity." Bomberg died in poverty, in St. Thomas's Hospital, in 1957; the neglect that he endured makes the saddest and most controversial story in the annals of modern British art. In his youth, before the First World War, Bomberg was a leading light of the London avant-garde, but he found scant support in his last thirty years. Reappraisal began almost immediately after his death, and has since acquired increased cultural weight. As a teacher at Borough Polytechnic, a public college in South London, from 1945 to 1953, Bomberg encouraged several artists who later rose to prominence, including Leon Kossoff and Frank Auerbach, and since he himself studied with Walter Sickert he can be seen as a link in a pedagogic chain stretching back to Sickert's teacher, James McNeill Whistler, and to Whistler's own master, Courbet.

The general public knew little of Bomberg's life until 1987, when Richard Cork published his monumental biography, "David Bomberg." Cork, *The Listener's* art critic and one of England's most gifted historians of modern art, and if his huge book only demonstrates in the end that Bomberg was a fine but distinctly minor painter, his scholarship has nonetheless rescued a fascinating career from oblivion. Cork relates, among many other details, the story of how Bomberg, then a seventeen-year-old printer's apprentice from the East End, was discovered, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, by

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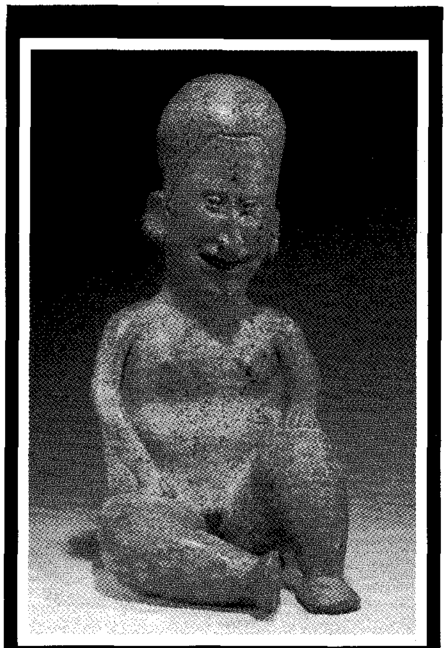

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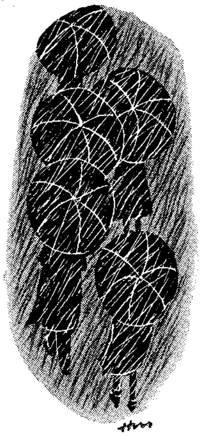
none other than John Singer Sargent. Bomberg was working on a drawing in the museum's cast court—which, with its crowding of unrelated plaster reproductions, was the perfect venue for this improbable encounter—when Sargent happened by, on his way out from the restaurant. He stopped to admire Bomberg's effort, and as Bomberg appeared to be powerfully built Sargent later invited him to pose in his Fulham Road studio. There, during several sessions, Bomberg was able to observe an accomplished draftsman at work, but he also soon realized that Sargent's current project was defectively imagined—"a very ill-conceived emulation of the Florentine" was how he later put it. With the assistance of a Jewish educational fund, Bomberg began attending the Slade, London University's art school. He also joined Sickert's classes, and Cork notes that it was probably from this genial mentor that he learned to disdain visual clichés, and to seek his subject matter in the rowdy social centers of popular London. As he began to explore the art world, he made friends with some of the most brilliant talents of the day, among them the poet Isaac Rosenberg and the painter Mark Gertler, both East End boys like him. He also met the painter and writer Wyndham Lewis, with whom he maintained a tense but mutually beneficial connection.

Bomberg was a man of total integrity and fierce candor. He was also one of those people whose names enact their characters: a friend of his youth, the writer Joseph Leftwich, once described him as "very 'blasty'—pugnacious is too mild a word," and added, "He wanted to dynamite the whole of English painting." Brought up in the overcrowded Jewish slum of Whitechapel, Bomberg felt a deep kinship with the scruffy world of popular democracy, the old London of cold-water flats and smoke-palled streets, and his views on the relation between life drawing and liberal society have come to seem vitally relevant. For Bomberg, life drawing entailed a kind of faith or abandon; he taught primarily by example, searching, with his beautiful clumsy dark line, for what he called "the spirit in the mass." In a number of remarkable tracts, still largely unpublished, he used an exalted Blakean rhetoric to stress the centrality of life drawing to art and to democracy: he sensed that a man before a drawing board is in some ways like a man at the polls—equal at that moment to all others, free of the weight of authority and money, and without audience. He believed that the fate of life drawing was linked to that of a free citizenry, for "drawing demands freedom" and "good draughtsmanship is Democracy's visual sign."



It took many years of labor, however, for Bomberg to gain his singular brand of wisdom; his early work reveals a somewhat contradictory temperament. Despite his exceptional powers of realistic observation, he was attracted to the rather naïve machine aesthetic represented by Wyndham Lewis and the Vorticists, and he visited Picasso in Paris, though he never really comprehended the nature of Cubism. While executing elegant illustrations and strong modernist pictures, he discovered what became his only truly personal theme—the labyrinth. His imagination was essentially architectural; if the figure played a meaningful role in his paintings, it was largely as a sort of Meccano contraption lurching about in the vast maze of the metropolis. At first, like the Futurists, he revelled in the dynamism of modern life; and in such pictures as "Jewish Theatre," "In the Hold," and "The Mud Bath"—all based on East End sights—he reduced his characters to a tangle of shafts and arcs that boldly "scythe" (to use Cork's metaphor) across the canvas.

But Bomberg's participation in the mechanical mowing down of soldiers at the Western Front radically changed his views about man, art, and nature: in 1915, he enlisted in the Royal Engineers and was sent to fight in Flanders, where he rapidly sank into a depression. Trench warfare filled him with a terrible dread. Like many of the young men one encounters in the memoirs of the period, Bomberg came to feel that the carnage served no earthly purpose and would probably go on forever. At one point, he shot himself in the foot and defiantly proclaimed this deed to a superior officer; for this he could have been executed, but self-inflicted wounds had become so common at the front that

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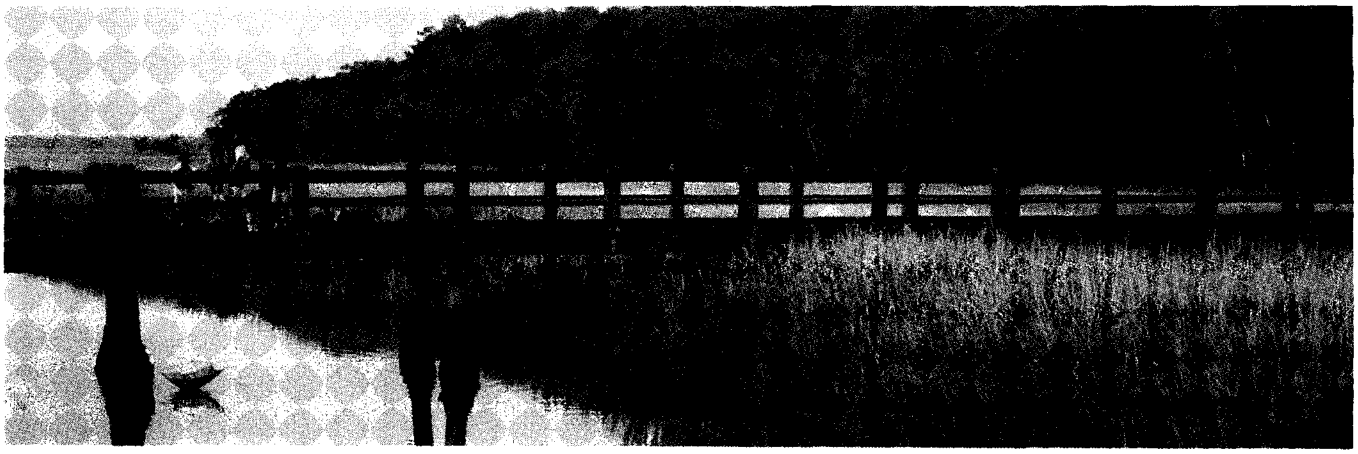

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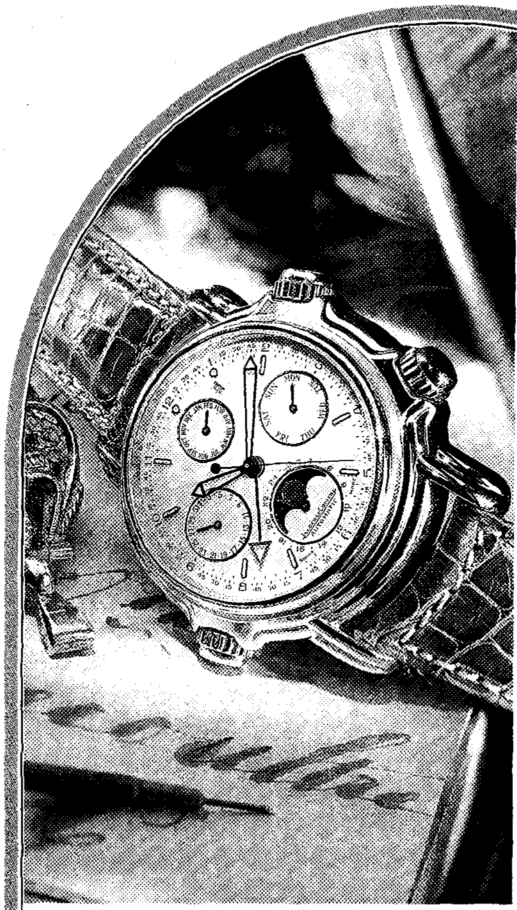

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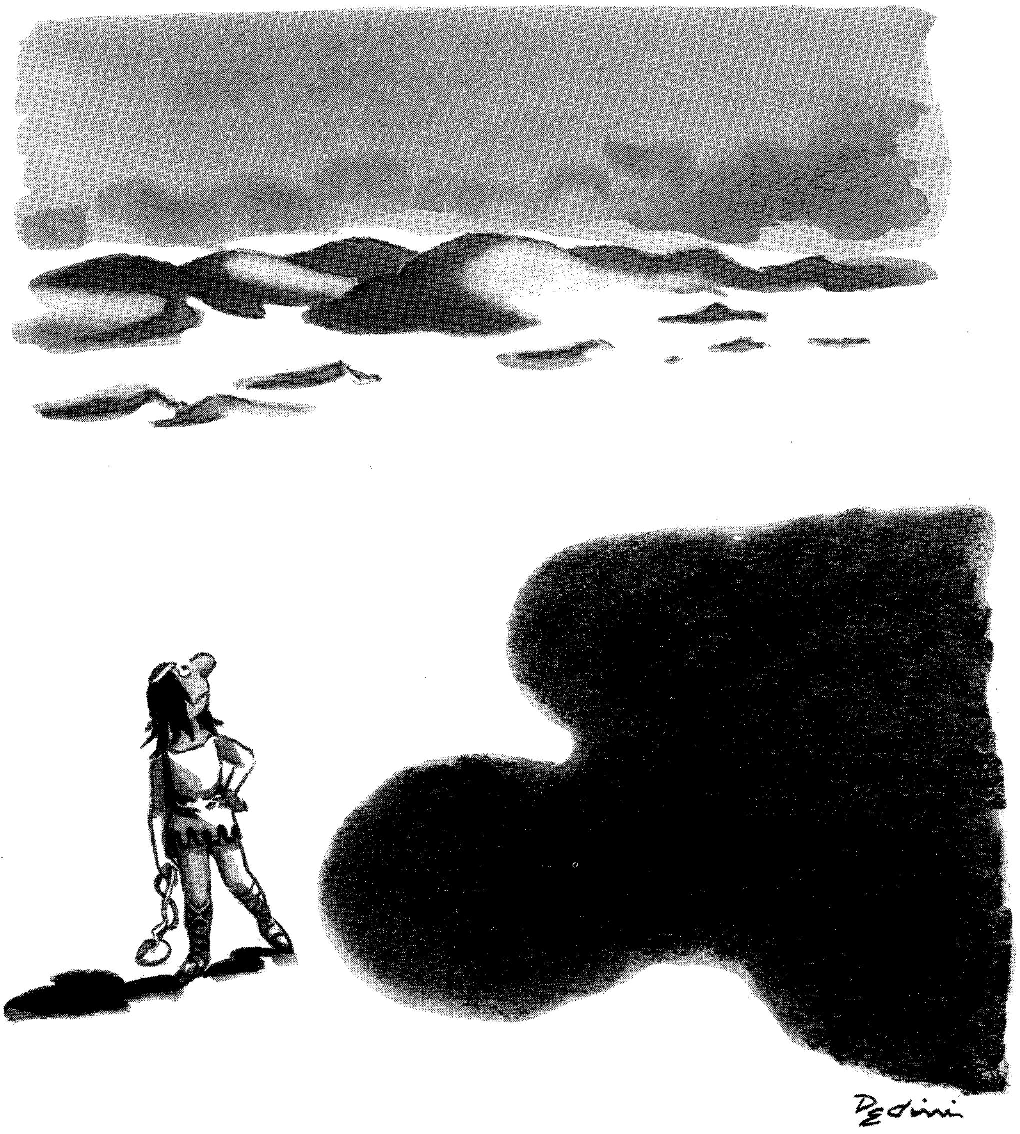
the officer merely docked his pay for a few weeks.

Bomberg saw the war as the first attempted suicide of mankind; the role played by technology distressed him deeply, and it also contributed to his loss of interest in the sort of chugging imagery, full of moving parts and machined-looking edges, that had characterized his earlier pictures. For a while, his direction seemed uncertain, and he would probably have found little patronage if a painter friend, Muirhead Bone, had not suggested that he apply to the Zionist Organization for support in painting a set of pictures depicting the fledgling Jewish homeland. Bomberg was not a Zionist—his experience at the front had disabused him of any faith he might have had in the value of *nationalism*—but the idea of a long sojourn in Palestine, where the sunlight would be strong and the architecture vaguely Cubistic, appealed to his artistic instincts. He arrived there in 1923, and had the good fortune to find a notable patron in Sir Ronald Storrs, the military governor of Jerusalem. Storrs was a highly cultivated and engaging man, a holdover from an earlier era in his antiquarian and preservationist sentiments, and he devoted unsparing efforts toward the restoration of Jerusalem as a city of architectural beauty and civilized piety. Storrs wanted old-fashioned topographical paintings that would record his restoration of Jerusalem; in his view, it would be Bomberg's task to "walk about Zion and go round about her: *and tell the towers thereof.*" Bomberg was a modern artist, and the production of glorified architectural renderings was not at all in his line, yet almost at once his aesthetic self took on a waxy pliancy in the hands of the amiable Storrs.

In the Palestine pictures he ricocheted between a fairly conventional sort of view painting and a more expressive treatment of space and atmosphere. Anticipating some of the most venturesome representational work of the nineteen-fifties, he found that remarkably broad and loose paint patches sitting on the canvas weave could account for perceived structure and atmosphere while frankly declaring their own physical presence. In the sweeping Mediterranean townscape he also rediscovered the theme of the labyrinth, his standing obsession. Jerusalem appears in his canvases as an inhabited



David Trying to Remember How Goliath Ever Got on His Calendar

• •

ruin, an elaborate system of oubliettes, and a reminder, in its multiplicity of boxy shapes, that the things man has made are beyond reckoning. There is something parched and desertlike about this imagery, yet also something English in the calm enumeration of roofs and windows and towers. Some of the bolder paintings look almost like geometrical puzzles, but the Capitoline accent of a dome against the horizon—usually that of the Muristan or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—tells us that some points of the compass are sacred, that here there is more than color and form, there are also angels and djinn. This vision of the Holy Land delighted Storrs, who later, in his memoirs, wrote excitedly of Bomberg's "cosmic stare."

In rural Spain between 1929 and 1933, Bomberg discovered that intricate human nesting patterns could reflect the romantic past. Playing on the British tradition of the tourist landscape, he managed to convey encyclopedic amounts of geographical information while putting oil paint through a new set of expressive paces. Yet these glaring, hypnotic pictures attracted little favor back in England, and he fell into such despondency that he produced no paintings at all between 1938 and 1941. He hit a low point in 1939, when the newly formed War Artists' Advisory Committee rejected his job application. Three years later, however, the committee relented, and the virtually destitute painter was dispatched to Burton-on-Trent to execute a set of pictures of an underground munitions magazine situated nearby.

Serving as a London fire watcher during the Blitz, Bomberg wandered hawk-eyed amid the shattered buildings and smoldering cinders of the City. It was here, in the late seventeenth century, after the Great Fire, that Christopher Wren and his associates labored to build a "New Jerusalem," a precinct of Christian prayer on British soil, and the sight of St. Paul's rising over the devastation must have reminded Bomberg of the domes of Jerusalem itself. In a series of charcoal sketches that he made of St. Paul's and the City, which are possibly the most original British drawings of our century, the labyrinth motif reappears with a ghastly beauty. One of the most extraordinary of these drawings hangs in the Imperial War Museum: it shows what can only be called a London bombed into abstraction.

When written surveys of contemporary British art appeared after the war, Bomberg did not figure in them, and he was miserably represented in a 1956 Vorticism show at the Tate. Various explanations have been offered. Had his visual ideas been too advanced for his audience? Had he put too much faith in his versatility and shifted styles too often, so that many otherwise well-disposed people couldn't figure out who he was? Had he painted too exuberantly in a culture that preferred a certain muffled reserve, so that, despite his adherence to representation, his work looked brash and foreign? He was certainly abrasive to picture merchants, and fearlessly blunt in the expression of his preferences. His East End manner was particularly offensive to people who were prejudiced against Jews, and he applied unsuccessfully for scores of jobs, including many for which he was thoroughly unfitted in the first place. Worst of all, he was plagued by doubts, and would stop painting for several years running, so that even dealers who admired him might well have wondered whether he could reliably provide them with product. At last, worn out by struggle and defeat, he died—and became famous. In 1958, the Arts Council Gallery put on an exhibition

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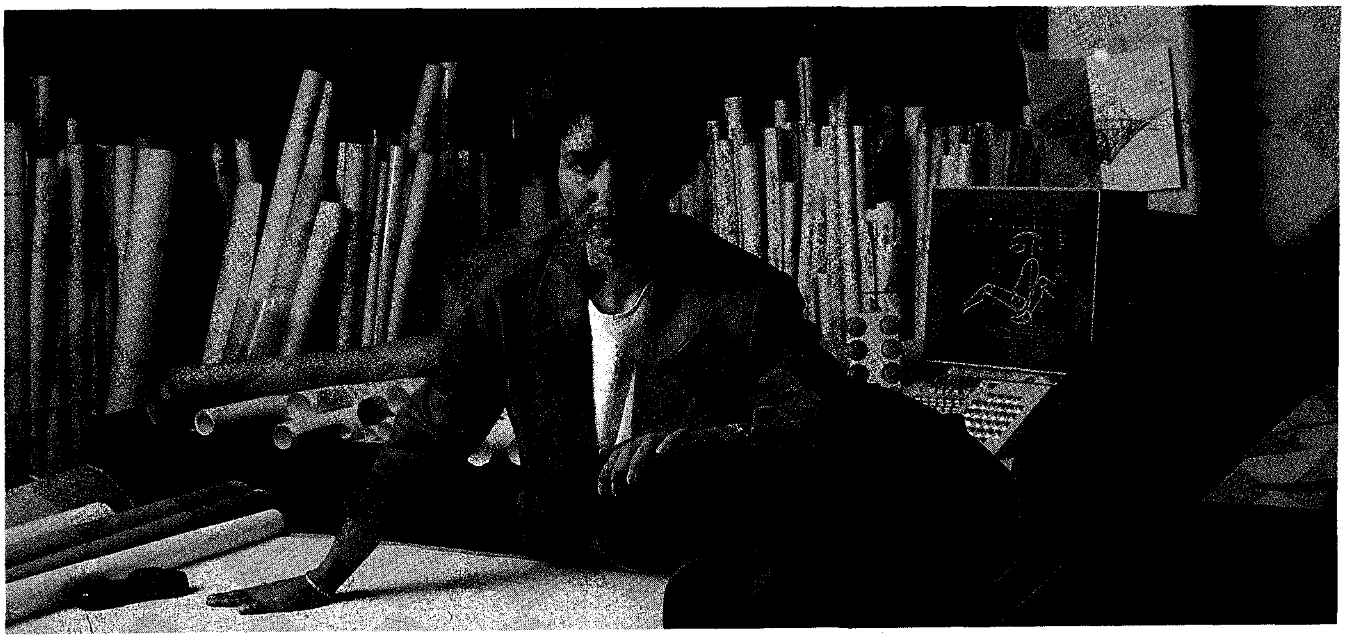

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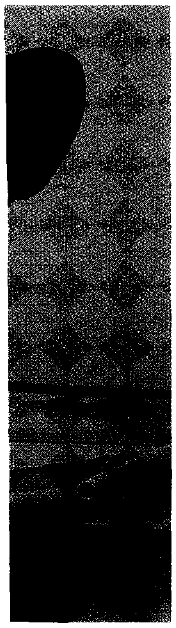

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of his work, accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by Andrew Forge, and in 1967 the Tate mounted an even larger retrospective, whose catalogue contained a ringing defense of his achievement by David Sylvester. In 1987, Richard Cork published his biography, and a full-scale Bomberg retrospective, arranged by Cork, came to the Tate the following year.

ACROSS the street from Christ Church, off Commercial Street in the East End, is an old pub called the Ten Bells, with a highly ornate entrance—a big lamp, fussy ironwork, pilasters encrusted with gilded masks. Inside, one afternoon, amid a jungle of Victorian tiles and a display of framed photographs relating to Jack the Ripper, Leon Kossoff—a short, dark-eyed, sallow-complexioned man—sat on a red banquette and talked to me about his painting. A few days before meeting him, I had seen, in the basement of the Tate, a picture of his that had fascinated me. This painting shows a huge public swimming pool near Willesden, in North London, where he has lived since 1970. Scores of children frolic about, in a kind of painterly shorthand suggesting that a single glance has somehow caught the future of an entire democratic population.

Often, Kossoff's paint handling has a childlike quality. As in Romanesque sculpture or in some of Cézanne's figure pictures, his imagery grows clumsy or contorted under the pressure of emotions that leave no time for measured delineation, and fresh impulses keep forcing him to re-state his shapes. Painting largely from memory, he sets up an implicit analogy between the visual recovery of something recently seen and the redemption of past time, and what his turbulent images forfeit in verisimilitude they make up for in poetic density. Kossoff's work isn't hard to understand—in fact, it's rather old-fashioned—but quite a few London viewers are disconcerted by it. They seem to look *into* his pictures, to see whether the objects there are substantially like the objects in the world, but if one glances slowly across his surfaces one begins to see things of greater significance. One notes the struggle of impulse against counter-impulse, the survival of awkward yet expressive passages, the bluntly carven quality of the handling, the grotesquerie.

STARING AT THE SEA ON THE DAY OF THE DEATH OF ANOTHER

The long body of the water fills its hollow,
slowly rolls upon its side,
and in the swaddlings of the waves,
their shadowed hollows falling forward with the tide,

like folds of Grecian garments molded to cling
around some classic immemorial marble thing,
I see the vanished bodies of friends who have died.

Each form is furled into its hollow,
white in the dark curl,
the sea a mausoleum, with countless shelves,
cradling the prone effigies of our unearthly selves,

some of the hollows empty, long niches in the tide.
One of them is mine
and gliding forward, gaping wide.

—MAY SWENSON

• •

It was a brilliant Indian-summer day, and Kossoff had just been drawing Christ Church for about three hours. He grew up in the East End, in Bethnal Green, and as a boy he trudged up and down Commercial Street almost every day, often stopping to look up at the great church; later, as a grownup, he twice tried to paint it. Neither of those attempts succeeded, and he came to the conclusion that certain motifs had to age in his mind—had to acquire a patina of remembrance—before he could tackle them with any hope of success. At last, the right moment had arrived, and more and more Christ Church paintings were springing to life in his studio. He felt that the building itself was strange, a little tortured, especially when seen from the rear. For him it was a repository not only of visual sensations but also of uneasy memories. It was probably these, he explained, that had welled up during his earlier attempts to draw the church, almost physically staying his hand, though it was also possible, he added, with a concessive smile, that he might have simply botched the execution, proved unequal to the task of fitting "all that"—his hands sketched a tall churchly presence in the air—onto his sheet of paper. As he talked on, he grew fantastically careful with his phrases; sometimes he inclined his head and rested it in the palm of his hand, half obscuring his speech; at other moments, gesturing with the same hand, he would hide his mouth as if to repent of something he had just said. It was an English gesture, deeply reticent, foreign to an American.

"You work not because you know but because you don't know," he said. "Every day, I get up knowing I can't draw and hoping that this day I'll learn."

I protested that there were different ways of knowing how to draw, but he waved my objection aside. He wasn't voicing some rarefied, philosophical conception of drawing, he insisted, and he wasn't denigrating his abilities; he was just making a brute statement of fact. As a student, he had never shown the slightest facility—he had even failed the Government Art Schools' drawing examination—and every one of his drawings, whatever else it might be, was a coming to terms with the unyielding truth that he just did not know how to do it. Color, too, was a mystery to him. "I just start off with the most obvious local colors," he said. "Whatever will do—like pale yellow for the church, or pink for a person's face. What I'm trying to do is to draw with the color—to get the drawing right." All his paint marks were really a hunting for the right drawing, which he discovered not at the beginning of a picture, as other painters might, but at the end, in the last few hours; there was no conscious construction to anything he did—it was all a succession of "crises," of constant re-seeings of the subject. As he explained that these crises were fraught with intense anxiety and totally devoid of any romantic exhilaration, I recalled that

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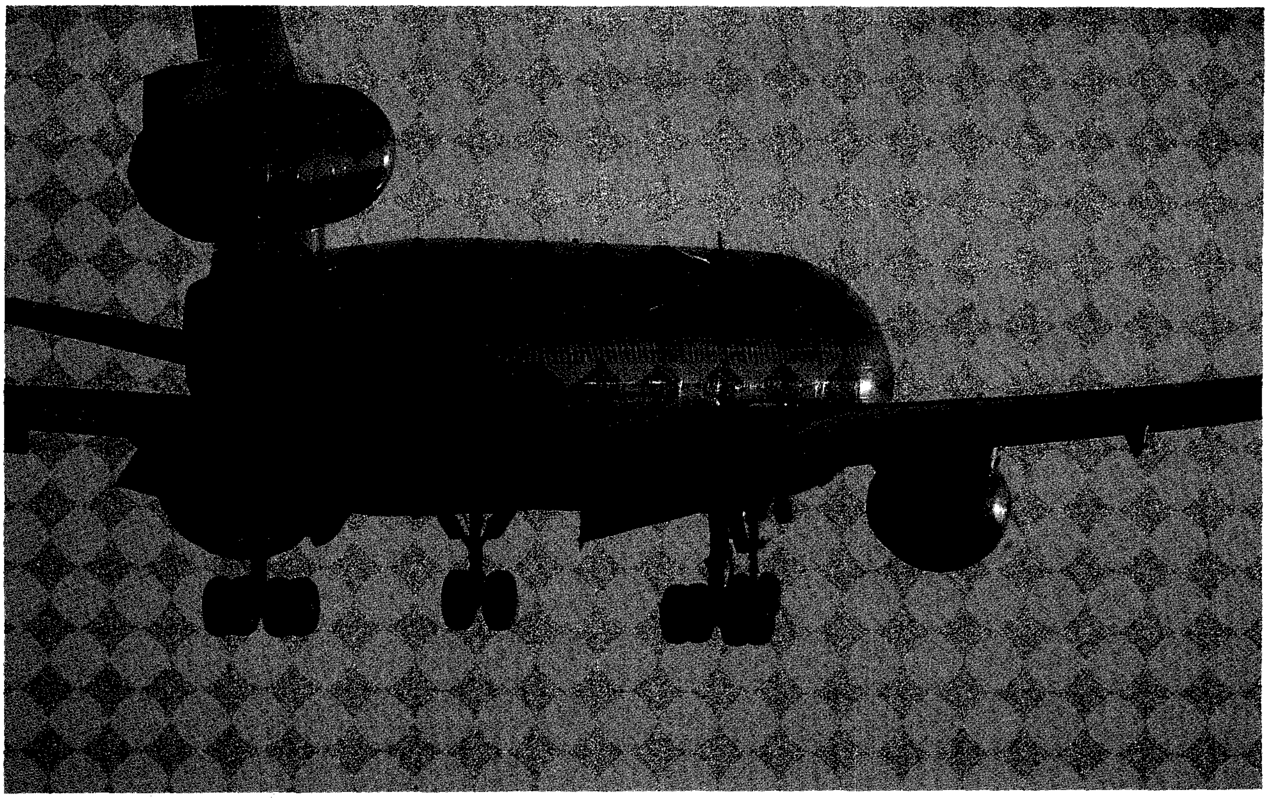

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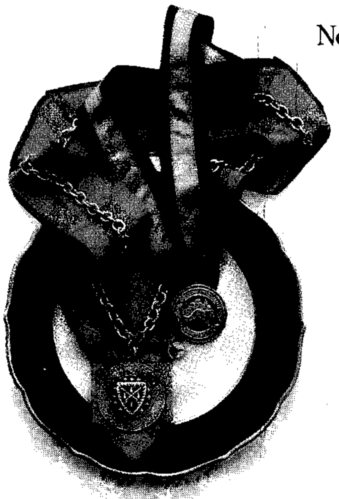

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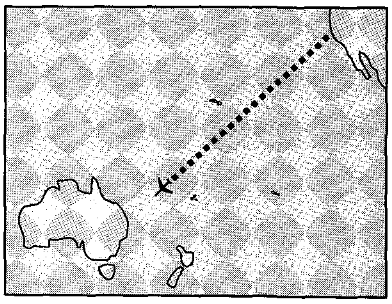

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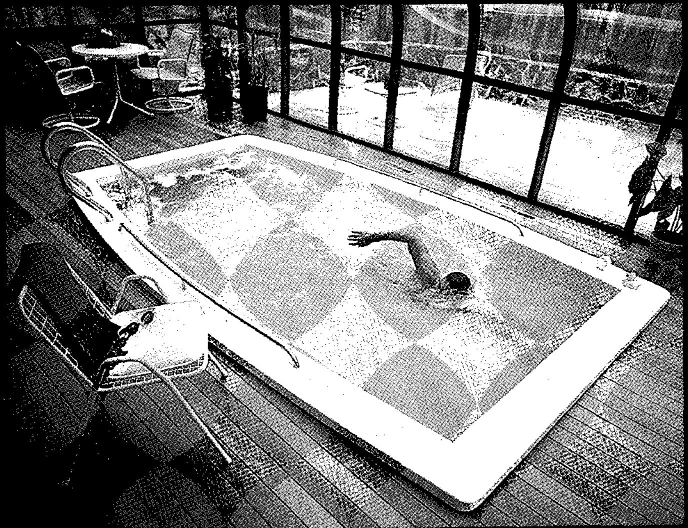

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in previous communications with me he had described his work as undergoing an "upheaval." Possibly he lived in a permanent upheaval, though his appearance fell short of the seismic. His clothes were nondescript—neither painters' duds nor mufti—and his gestures were inscribed within an arc of restraint. He had the slope shoulders, the disenchanted air, and the obliging manner of an old-time London tradesman, and his dark-circled eyes emanated a sort of oysterish wisdom. He clearly had no desire to talk to journalists; he seemed to regard all interest in his work as a dangerous blandishment, a poisoned chalice. Once, when I had announced myself on the phone, he had replied, "Oh, hello, I'm sorry," and then repeated "I'm sorry" in a fainter voice, and then he had hung up.

We decided to go out and sit in the Christ Church close. The church, built in the early eighteenth century to drawings by Nicholas Hawksmoor, is generally regarded as a masterpiece of the Baroque. Its steeple, faced in white Portland stone, rises serenely into the rushing London sky; by a trick of design, large parts of it seem to have been scalloped out, and its curious concave bays enforce a remarkable sense of weightless monumentality. One thing seems to menace the church, and that is the encroachment of high rises. From in front of the building we could see Broadgate, a huge business complex then under construction both beside and directly over Liverpool Street Station; it is the largest building site in London after Canary Wharf, in the docklands. Like Christ Church, Broadgate is largely a composition in curves, but in much of its design and detailing, its postmodernist stairways and balusters and lamps, it lapses into slick, movie-palace elegance. It looms over the entire East End—all those half-repaired roads, all that Urdu graffiti—like a tantalizing, unfulfillable promise.

Half a dozen derelicts were sharing a bottle in the garbage-strewn area in front of Christ Church. The close turned out to be locked, and Kossoff suggested that we try the grounds of St. Matthew's, nearer the heart of Bethnal Green. As we started off, he confessed to despising the Broadgate development. It wasn't so much a matter of its parvenu architecture or of its belittling of the East End as of its raw

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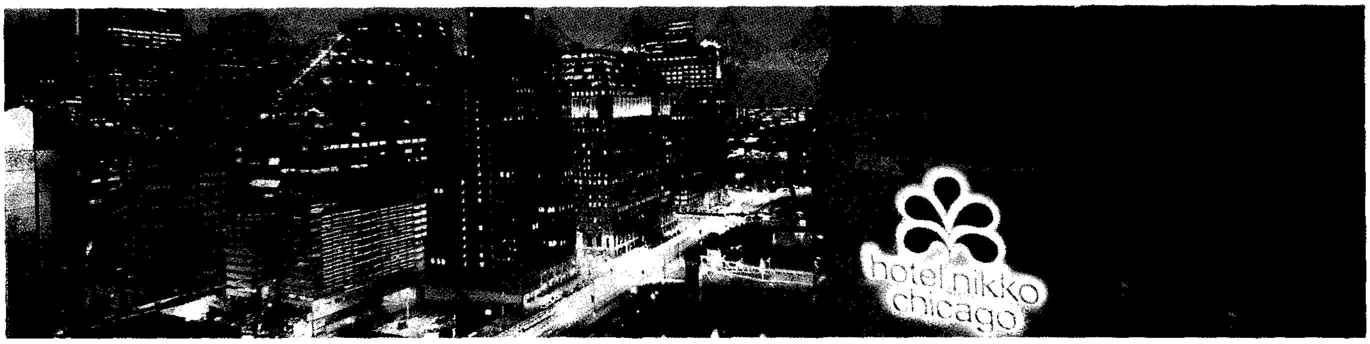

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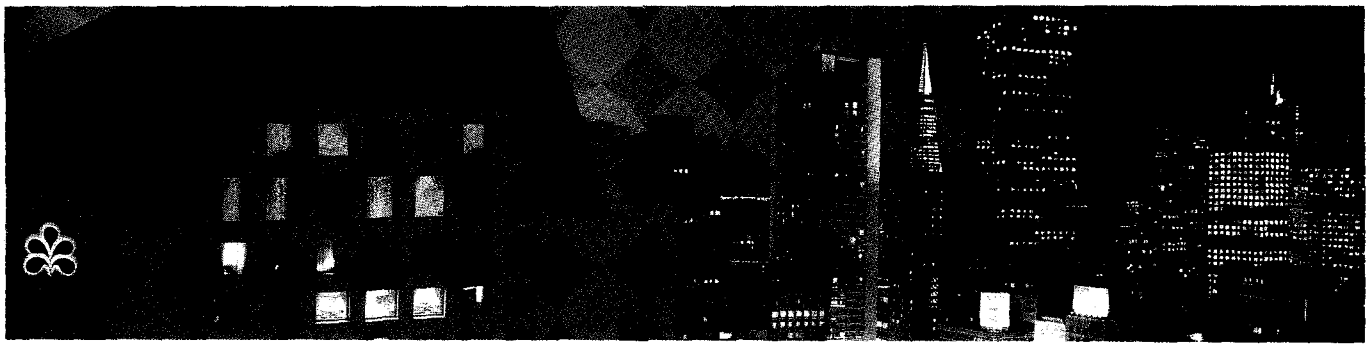

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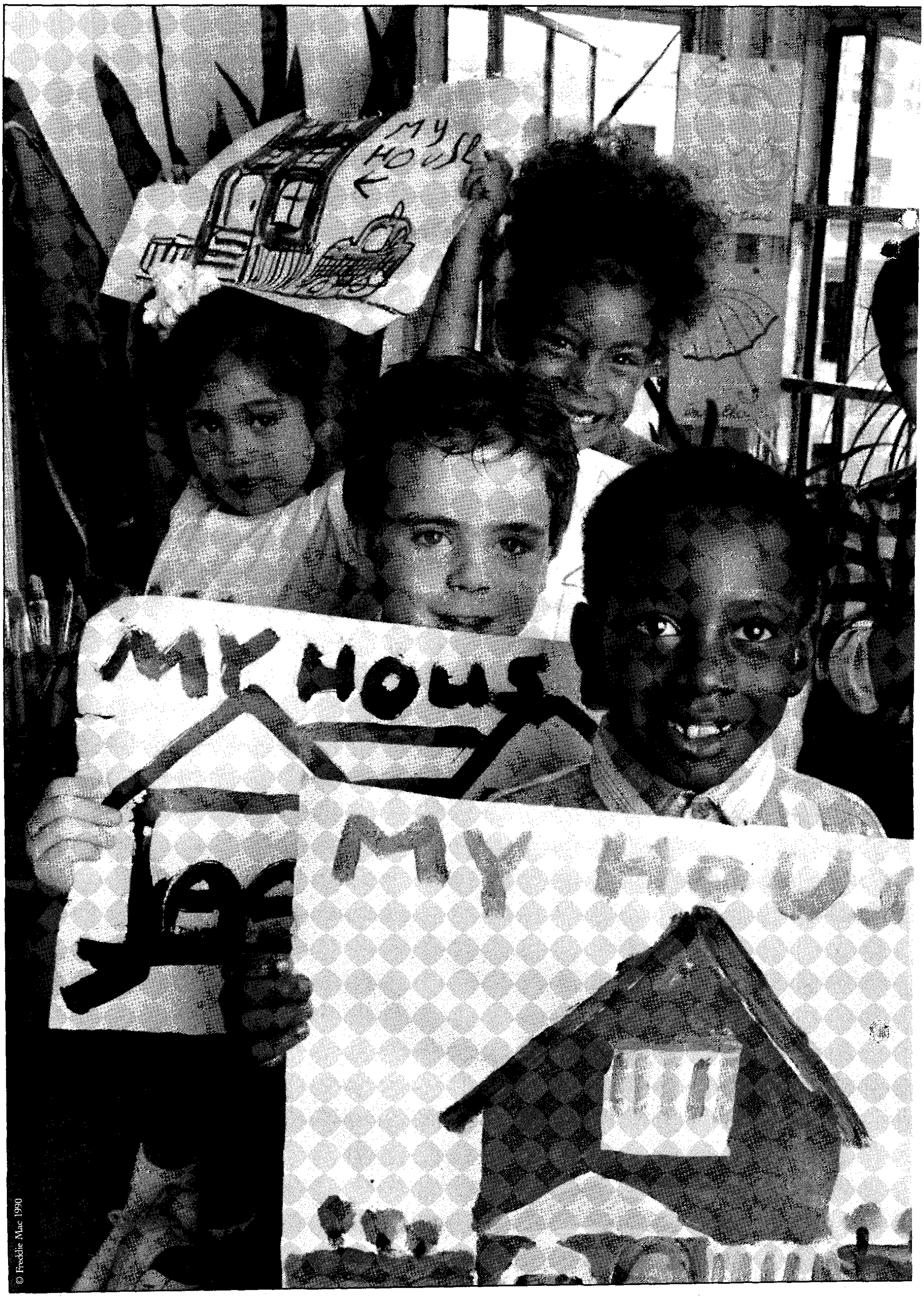
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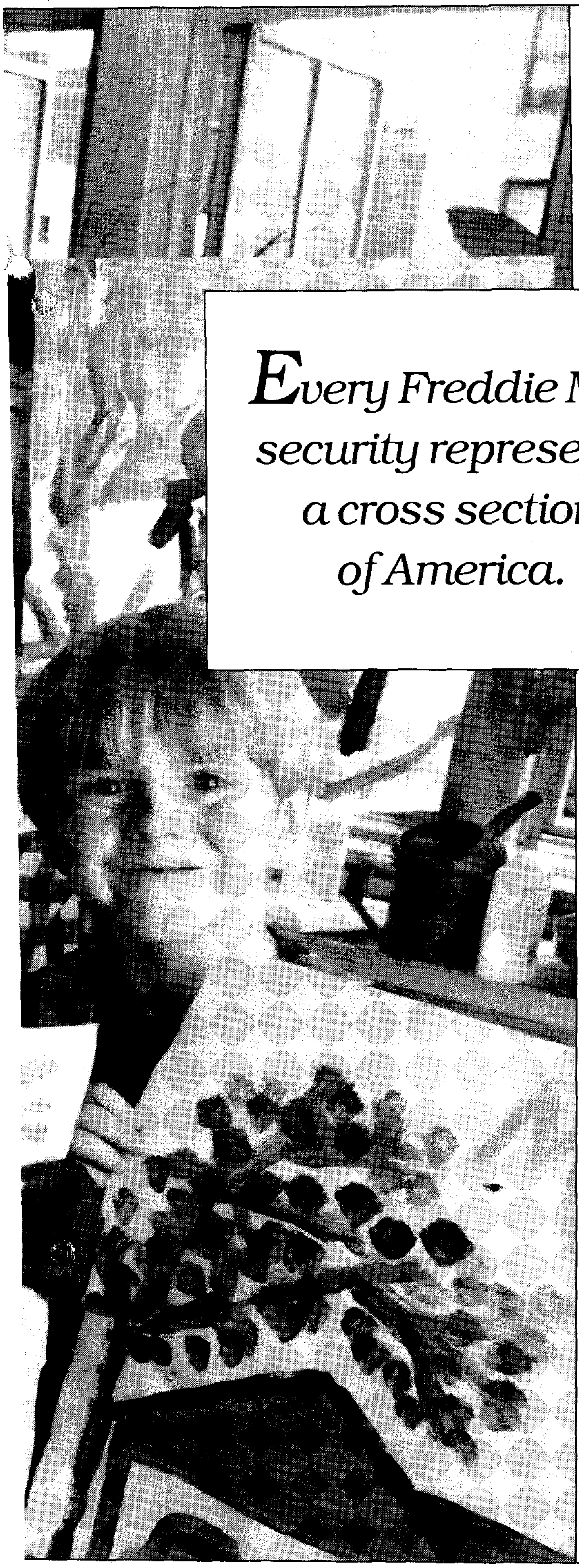

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physical threat. Buildings like Christ Church and St. Anne Limehouse, *Hawksmoor's other great church in the* eastern part of London, needed space around them for their lines to be seen. It wasn't enough just to let them be: look at what had happened to Wren's City churches, which had survived the depredations of the Luftwaffe only to be dwarfed by office buildings and tower blocks. In fact, Kossoff said, his feelings of urgency about painting the church had to do not only with the persistence of memory and with his own aging but also with the doom—the callous entombment—that almost certainly awaited Hawksmoor's creation.

Kossoff was born off the City Road, which starts behind Liverpool Street Station and curves miles north to Angel Centre, in Finsbury. His parents had emigrated from Kiev. His father, who for some years worked as a baker's deliveryman, eventually owned a small chain of bakeries in the northeastern borough of Hackney. The household was dominated by the stern demands of the trade—the early rising, the unrelenting hours—and the young Kossoff was viewed as the heir to his parents' productive way of life, though by the age of twelve he was spending a good deal of time drawing. Between 1945 and 1949, he did his military service, which included tours of duty in several European countries, and after demobilization he entered St. Martin's School of Art. This was clearly an act of rebellion against his father's wishes, and I gathered from Kossoff's conversation that his parents were upset by his decision to stray so far from the path they had beaten. At St. Martin's, Kossoff became friends with Frank Auerbach, who, like him, was Jewish but of a wholly different background: the child of a wealthy Berlin family that was later annihilated by the Nazis, he had been sent to Britain at the age of eight and educated at a Quaker boarding school. Auerbach, five years younger than Kossoff, was also enrolled as a student in David Bomberg's evening class at Borough Polytechnic, and he persuaded Kossoff to join him there. Kossoff remained in the class for two years, while continuing his studies at St. Martin's, and then put in three years at the Royal College of Art. In those days, Auerbach and Kossoff often posed for each other, and their common use of a heavy impasto—their reliance on "painterly attack" as a means of slamming the image across the surface of the panel—has caused them to be flippantly conjoined in the chatter of the London world of painting.

Kossoff had his first one-man show in 1957, at the Beaux Arts Gallery, a major showcase of London talent. (The gallery was run by the painter Helen Lessore, who was Walter Sickert's sister-in-law.) By then, he had fastened on many of the subjects that still preoccupy him—views of the northern and eastern inner suburbs, demolition and building sites, street and crowd scenes, railway cuts and junctions, his parents, his wife, his two brothers. He also did a series of studies of St. Paul's—the same Capitoline theme that had fascinated Bomberg—and later came an interest in the children's swimming pool near Willesden. Kossoff's imagery evokes the populist atmosphere of much twentieth-century British art: looking at his cityscapes, one can almost smell the steam of marshalling yards and the lime's breath of cellars and alleys in winter.

Heading now toward Bethnal Green, we passed between the famous rows of Queen Anne houses in Fournier Street, formerly dilapidated and currently in the process of gentrification; at the end of the block was the local mosque, the Jamme Masjid, housed in a Georgian building that bore the faded inscription "1773 UMBRA SUMUS" high in its wall, over a faded sundial. Around the corner, in Brick Lane, men were pouring out of the mosque—swarthy, paunchy fellows, many of them elderly, with tufts of white hair flying out from under their white knit skullcaps.

First the Huguenots, then the Jews, and now the Asians—all had come directly from debarkation to the slum of Brick Lane. During Kossoff's childhood, an enormous number of impoverished Jewish immigrants—perhaps as many as a hundred thousand—lived in the area; they were mostly survivors (or descendants of survivors) of the Russian pogroms of the period between 1881 and 1914. (In 1914, Bomberg had painted a famous picture of the bathhouse here.) Kossoff spoke of the overcrowded Brick Lane of the Depression era with a sort of casual sadness in which no trace of either humor or nostalgia could be detected, and though his reminiscences conjured up a street of drapers' shops and shaggy, disputatious men in gabardines, what we actually saw was a pair of bent Asians in dhotis, who moved slowly forward ahead of us through the perfume of the cookshops and the knots of chatting loiterers. At length, we reached St. Matthew's Church, a dun-colored edifice with a wooden crucifix over its portal. We entered the close and sat down on a wooden bench across from two tall poplars.

In the near-medieval Jewish world of his childhood, Kossoff said, there had been no such thing as painting. Unlike writers, who were people of the book, painters were not held in esteem; to many they were cringers, schnorrers, almost beggars. Yet from his mother, who worked near Christ Church and had occasion to meet many people—and also from Joseph Leftwich, who was friendly with his father—Kossoff had heard about the Jewish artists of Whitechapel, including David Bomberg. "So, even as a youngster, I

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knew about Bomberg, though I never thought I was committed or talented enough to associate with him," Kossoff said. "Much later—when I got out of the Army, and Frank Auerbach persuaded me to join Bomberg's class—I learned more about him, though I was never really a member of his inner group. For all his talent, he never made one feel like a student but almost like an equal. His actual teaching didn't affect me that much. What did affect me was that he was a survivor. He had survived as a painter, and so I might, too." Yet Kossoff had declined to exhibit with Bomberg and his students. He didn't believe in groups and labels, and he reminded me of what Gustave Moreau, the teacher of Matisse and Rouault, once told his students: "You will not be my equal until you deny me."

When I raised the question of the neglect of Bomberg, Kossoff replied that the English just weren't pictorial-minded—at least, not in Bomberg's day. What they liked—what they had always liked—was illustration, in one form or another. They weren't interested, he said, in serious painting: as late as the nineteen-forties, one could still pick up Pissarros in the London galleries for a hundred guineas or so. And then there was the issue of snobbery, which Richard Cork's biography had skirted. Kossoff spoke with barely concealed scorn of the hypocrisy—or was it sheer lack of nerve?—with which such matters as class and racial prejudice were still passed over in England; the presumption that a genteel anti-Semitism, mingled with a squeamish distaste for Bomberg's back-street manners, had played no role in the London art community's rejection of him was simply ridiculous. Of course, Bomberg's conduct had often been appalling; he had behaved with art dealers in a way that was so belligerent, so intimidating, that they had been quite put off by the idea of working with him. Kossoff recalled one dealer who had been terribly upset by Bomberg's adamant insistence that his pictures be shown according to his precise instructions. But all this was beside the point. Nobody had ever claimed that painters were easy to get on with, and the sheer strength of Bomberg's ability—especially in the talent-poor English art world of those days—certainly outweighed all other considerations. Yet Kossoff also noted that Bomberg was a man so cussedly principled that his

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dukes were always up, and that it was easy to imagine him rankled by slights that a person of greater poise might have absorbed more easily. There was the example of Mark Gertler, Bloomsbury's "Jewish painter," who, with his exceptional talent and almost girlish beauty, had become a lion in the salon of Lady Ottoline Morrell. Gertler, too, was a Whitechapel boy and the child of Galician immigrants who had lived on the edge of starvation. To make money, his father had at one time hawked buttons and at another time sanded walking sticks. Gertler left the East End in 1915, at the age of twenty-four, but not before executing a number of brilliant paintings that translated his down-at-heel Jewish and bohemian experiences into a vivid personal idiom. Unlike Bomberg, Gertler got on well in society—for a while, at least. What troubled Kossoff about Gertler's trajectory, however, was his gradual estrangement from his roots, and his eventual espousal of a sort of blue-rinsed Parisian modernism. Gertler lost his way, and ended up a suicide at the age of forty-eight; though Kossoff ventured no explanation for this, he implied that any attempt to escape from the gross data of one's existence could only lead to an empty, unfelt art.

For Kossoff, being a painter meant examining one's own immediate surroundings, however unpleasant. In stray phrases and glints of images, he portrayed himself as a plodder, a stoic, a Sisyphus of art, and something in his choice of words suggested a distinct fondness for his plight, a coziness with his personal boulder. His apprehension lest his work be accepted in the wrong way—as a set of mere illustrations of his life—was strong enough to argue a surreptitious wish that it not be accepted at all. Clearly, he relished his outsider status; while conceding that he had enjoyed a certain local recognition for over two decades, he insisted that this was success of a very limited order and might easily have continued unchanged for two more decades had a certain collector not happened on the scene. This collector was Charles Saatchi, the founder, with his brother, Maurice, of the mammoth advertising firm of Saatchi & Saatchi.

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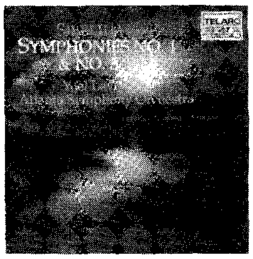

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paintings en bloc, and now he owned fifteen major pieces. There was an obvious financial reason for Saatchi to be interested in acquiring a group of Kossoffs—he had a fine nose for major, or potentially major, artists whose prices hadn't yet peaked—but his personal interest in these pictures rather unsettled their creator, who recalled that when Saatchi came to his studio to look at some work he had turned out to be disarmingly modest and candidly curious, like a person who had a genuine love for painting. The whole thing utterly stumped Kossoff. Why, he wondered, would a man like Saatchi—an entrepreneur, a figure from the world of marketing, promotion, and chic design—take an interest in his work, which was manifestly unchic and had nothing in common with most of what Saatchi was buying?

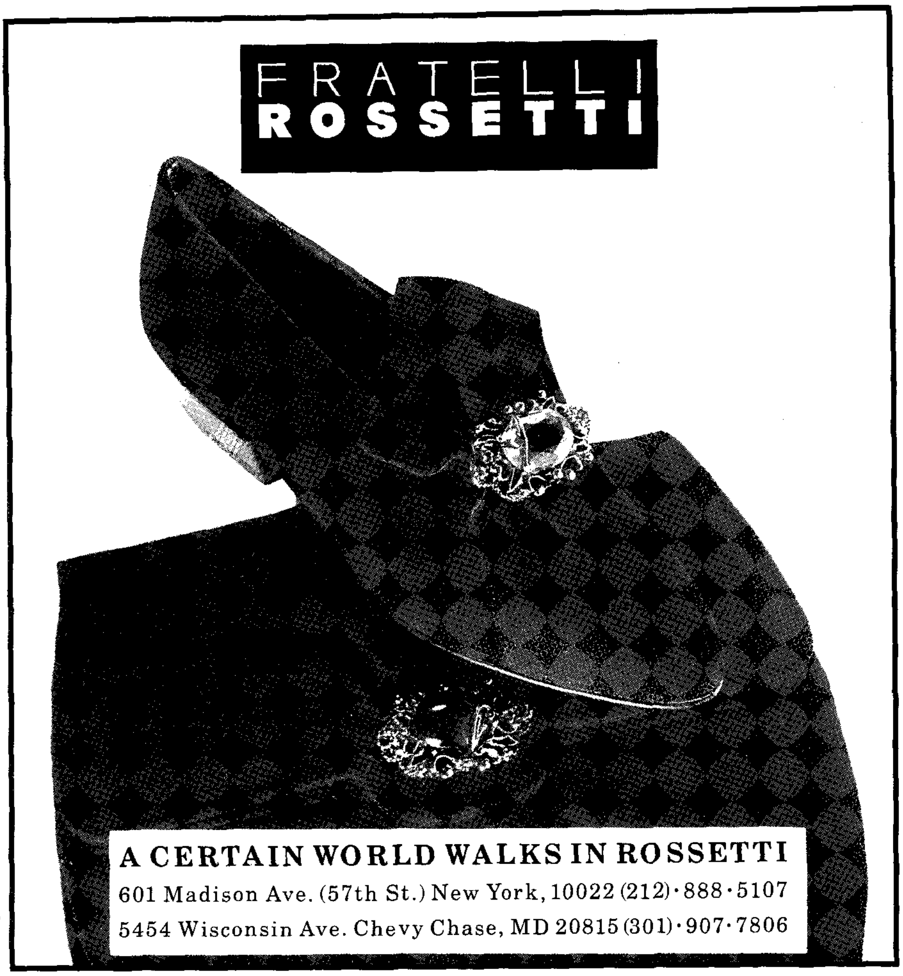
I had noticed that whenever Londoners discussed Charles Saatchi there were these worries, these doubts. Was he a true collector, with the collector's inspired cupidity, his compulsion to accumulate some particular sort of object? Or was he merely a glorified trader, who was prepared to dispose of his holdings under the right conditions? Certainly Kossoff had no way of knowing—though he was aware that Saatchi had already got rid of a few expensive pictures. At the same time, it was Saatchi who had yanked him out of the shadows and into the limelight of high prices and journalistic hoopla. "Saatchi changed my life," Kossoff said flatly. His expression was so quizzical that I couldn't tell whether the change had brought him pleasure or pain or only some final sense of life's preposterousness.

I HAD by now acquired the habit of asking everyone I met in the London world of painting how he or she felt about the fate of David Bomberg. The neglect of Bomberg was a distressing reminder that every age—including, doubtless, our own—banishes some of its ablest talents to limbo. As I studied Cork's book, however, I began to feel that Bomberg's claim on the reader's sympathy was somewhat weaker than it had at first appeared. There was a sense, of course, in which the whole tragic story defied rational understanding, but an artist's best work often plays Jekyll to the Hyde of his private personality, and this seemed to have been the case with David Bomberg. Whatever in his nature was fractious or imbalanced did not show up in his teaching or in his more exemplary pictures, and thus all the tributes of his admiring students—which Cork quotes at length—did not really help to elucidate his plight. Yet within the tale of what was done to Bomberg lies embedded the smaller tale of what he did to other people, which, it turns out, was often rather disagreeable. Cork's narrative contains a long train of snarling, Hollywood-style metamorphoses, in which our hero's darker self blackens a fellow-student's eye; brains a certain Professor Brown with a palette; organizes a revolt within the Omega Workshops; tries to provoke a fistfight between his brother, who was a professional boxer, and Wyndham Lewis; earns the enduring hatred of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska; so infuriates Ben Nicholson on a painting trip to Lugano that Nicholson buys him a ticket home to England; falls afoul of the very Zionist cultural institutions on whose patronage he subsists; antagonizes a detachment of Bedouin guards; alienates his friend Muirhead Bone; obliges his family to live in a tent; and, in a particularly absurd incident, throws a pile of baby clothes out the window. As spectators, we may find all this quite rollicking, but nothing suggests that either of his two wives found it especially entertaining. "He seems to have suffered from a deep-seated emotional insecurity which impelled him to cloak it in arrogance," Cork writes.

In Brighton, one misty, salty morning, I rang Dennis Creffield's bell. From the flight of steps in front of his building, on Marine Parade, I could see Brighton Pier and, farther off, in a shimmer of sunlight, the ruined beauty of West Pier. Creffield is one of those lesser-known English artists whom Kitaj frequently praises. He was born in London in 1931, and in his late teens he, too, studied with David Bomberg at Borough Polytechnic. After three years there, he went on to the Slade, where he won the Tonks prize for life drawing, and later he taught at the University of Leeds and Brighton Polytechnic. Creffield has had one-man shows at a number of important places, including the Leeds City Art Gallery and the Serpentine Gallery, in Hyde Park. I had seen some photographs of his drawings in the magazine *Modern Painters*, and though photographs often fail to capture the spirit of drawings, these had greatly interested me. This was the same Creffield who was a source for the penultimate chapter of the Cork biography, in which he had borne touching witness to Bomberg's generosity and lofty sense of purpose. So by coming to Brighton I was seeking to kill two birds with one stone: to look at Creffield's drawings for whatever pleasure they might afford and to put a few questions to him about the neglect of Bomberg.

In a photograph of Bomberg's students in the book, Creffield appeared as a beardless, childish-looking seventeen-year-old with unruly fair lamb's-wool curls. Now, more than forty years later, he was a shortish, slender man in a pink Henley shirt, with a domed brow and thinning hair worn long in back. He showed me upstairs to a flat in a house that had obviously always been divided into flats, and his own instantly revealed that he either had no money or was totally uninterested in money or in any veneer of elegance. It was the apartment of an old-fashioned bohemian who lived and breathed art, with reproductions and sketches and bibelots piled up everywhere and proliferating over the walls and tables. At the front was his studio, in which piles of big charcoal drawings, about a yard square, lay on the floor. The studio was painted entirely white and lit by a blaze of watery sunshine; a large bay window gave the impression of bellying out over the Channel. Through its panes little was visible but the sea itself, a broad expanse of rippling gray, surmounted by pewter-and-foam clouds.

Creffield had barely introduced himself when he began to explain why living in Brighton suited his character: despite certain novel vulgarities that threatened to drown out the associations proper to the place—those grand old memories of dirty weekends, private detectives, co-respondents, and Graham Greene crooks—Brighton, he said, was still a fine, seedy, romantic place to dwell. This had to do partly with the light, which was positively Mediterranean, and partly with the town's climate of truancy. It still was a spot to visit not with the wife and kiddies but rather with a secret sweetheart, and if one happened to end up working here—over this seafront heaving with kissing couples and screeching with penny arcades—one's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labors derived a certain benefit from it. They took on a larky, picnicky quality that nicely counterbalanced the vast moral imperative of the sea and sky, which were constantly urging one to get on with it and make something of one's moment on earth.

Creffield's big charcoal drawings were all of churches. He explained that in 1987 the British Arts Council had commissioned him to draw the twenty-six medieval monastic cathedrals of England, and that he had since drawn other cathedrals—including St. Paul's—that do not belong to this category. It was a project dear to his heart, he said, for ever since the age of seventeen, when Bomberg set him to drawing the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, he had wanted to tackle all the great Norman and Gothic basilicas as a unified theme. He explained that he was a Catholic, and that his religious beliefs had contributed to this ambition. From February to November, 1987, he wandered about with a trailer, applying to the appropriate ecclesiastical authorities to gain access to closes, naves, apses, and choirs. Since he hated to be observed while drawing, he executed most of the work in the very early morning or in the late afternoon and the evening. The project yielded hundreds of drawings, many of which were currently on tour all over England, but Creffield had gone right on drawing cathedrals, and there was unfinished work on the walls.

"I conceived of my tour as a sort of course in drawing," he said. "I wanted each cathedral almost to make the drawing by itself, and when things were going well I would leave off working not when I'd achieved some structure or definition but just when the drawing felt 'said'—technically, it could have been quite incomplete. My drawings have nothing to do with transferring a retinal image onto a piece of paper, but rather with recording an emotional experience, which could include a purely mental image of a building, or a sensation of length or vastness that would never have fit on my paper if I'd rendered it topographically."

Creffield had a knack for juxtaposing the cursory and the highly detailed. He could casually hit the stride of Gothic tracery, converting it into something like the brilliant dashes on painted pottery, and he relished laying fretworks and filigrees next to staid black shapes. He used flying buttresses to get

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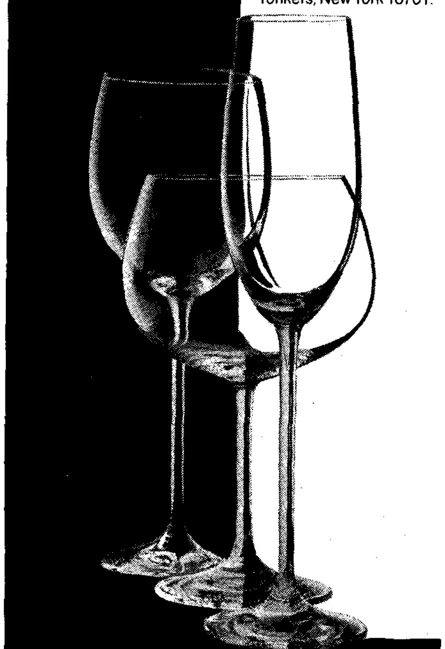

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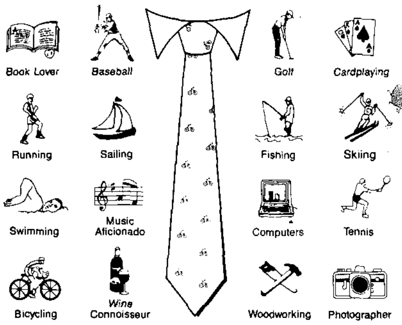

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a diagonal, skipping movement that energized the whole page, but he could suddenly downshift into wariness, abandoning all his shoulder and elbow jive in favor of a tense wristy caution. He would do careful fan vaulting, like the patterns of foam the tide leaves on a beach; then, a moment later, within a broad gloom of nearly undifferentiated charcoal soot, he would float a single slot of white so cannily into place that [illegible] whole Norman crossing, with all its shafts and ribs, swam into the imagination. It was a sociable appeal to the viewer's habits of visual inference: a lighthearted flick of his crayon, pinning down the odd crocket or finial, summoned up in one's mind half-forgotten images of architectural elevations, or caused drowned memories of an evensong at Ely to rise to the surface of awareness. There was a classic, European sense of shared heritage to the whole endeavor. Creffield seemed to have learned from all the master masons of medieval England, and perhaps he belonged to the last generation that had the training—or the mere sense of connectedness—to do so. He knew his cathedrals the way older people know Shakespeare, and, in fact, he was eager to point out the similarity between the churches and the plays. "It's that medieval aspect of Shakespeare," he said. "The ebullience, the cosmoslike vastness! And then there is the anonymity, the suppression of ego. We don't really know who Shakespeare was, just the way we don't really know who built the cathedrals. And this isn't 'a regrettable lacuna in the information at our disposal' "—he mimicked a pedant's diction—"it's part of the whole idea. Nowadays so much art is only ego, yet that's just what we've got to get rid of."

He plucked some photographs off a table. "Have you been to Southwell?" he asked. "It's in Nottinghamshire. Has a large thirteenth-century chapter house—octagonal. All around the capitals, gables, and moldings of the stalls are these wonderful leaves, the so-called leaves of Southwell. A triumph of English carving. Look at these curiously realistic heads poking out from the springing of the gables. Look at the oddly swollen cheeks of that damsel with the chaplet. Splendid, eh? Here's Jack-in-the-Green, an ancient English tree spirit who looks out from among the fronds." He held up the photograph and communed with Jack for a moment, then peered at me suspiciously. There was something wild or woodsy, something Druidical, about him. His features seemed to gather themselves into a knot at the center of his face, from which they bristled in my direction.

"What, actually, are you writing about?" he asked curtly.

I had already told him over the telephone, but I reiterated my interests: Bomberg, Kossoff, himself, and so on.

"Kossoff, eh? We were in Bomberg's class together. Let me tell you something—you mustn't pay any attention to those boys Kossoff and Auerbach when they start to go on about difficulty and struggle, and all that rubbish. Those boys have always been incredibly ambitious. Those boys were showing in their teens."

Creffield insisted that he respected Kossoff and Auerbach as artists, but that they had always been great successes, had always taken the high road to acclaim. The most infuriating thing about them was that they were widely regarded as the inheritors of David Bomberg, whereas, in reality, during Bomberg's lifetime they had refused to join any of his groups and had gone their separate ways. Creffield launched into a brief version of the saga of Bomberg's last years—the Borough Group, the Borough Bottega Group, the synods, the excommunications, the schisms, the ecumenical reconciliations—and of how "those boys," as he kept on referring to Kossoff and Auerbach, had never really grasped Bomberg's teaching in the first place, whereas he himself had held the Master's banner aloft. In fact—he saw no reason to deny it—he was Bomberg's spiritual son. Like Bomberg, he had always tried, inch by inch and second by second, to keep his painting open to the impress of his feelings, and, like Bomberg, he had been repaid for his pains with a total absence of worldly success. Yet his very failure had kept him mobile and elastic, unlike Kossoff and Auerbach, who, being tied to smart galleries, had sunk into self-repetition. They had every right, of course. To whom did it matter, certainly not to Creffield, that some people bartered their freedom for a monstrous visibility and stood about like giants in fetters,

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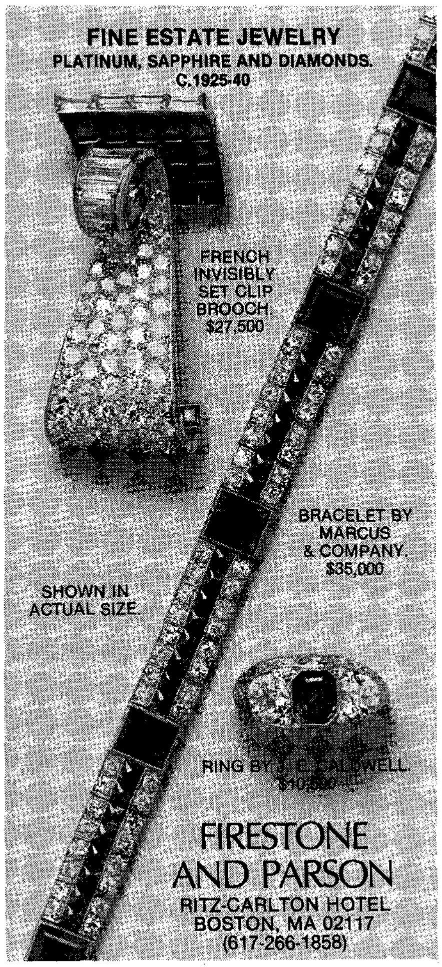

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blocking everyone's way? He, at least, who was undiscovered (the fact that Anglia TV had just completed a film on him apparently counted for nothing), *had used his obscurity to protect* his independence, and so to this day made strictly voluntary decisions in the practice of his art.

Creffield might have gone on like this for some time had a girl not entered the room. She was pretty and blond and seemed hesitant to intrude, though it was perfectly clear that she lived there. Creffield radiantly introduced her as his "sweetie," and in a soft, perturbed voice she said something about a baby asleep in the stairwell outside, who shouldn't be wakened if possible, and how there wasn't much of anything for lunch. She must have been at least thirty years younger than Creffield, who had several times morosely described himself to me as a sixty-year-old, though in fact he was fifty-eight.

In the kitchen, we fixed ourselves some bread and cheese and wine, and then we went back into the studio. We sat down across from each other at a table by the big bay window, and I asked Creffield to give me his impressions of Bomberg.

"Well, *when I came to Borough* Polytechnic he was already quite ill," Creffield replied, "and he sensed that his work would not be accepted in his lifetime. So he conceived of his students as being able to take up what he wouldn't be able to do. He was handing on the torch, so to speak, and he treated his students like colleagues. Can you imagine a man of his achievement putting his paintings on a railing in the Victoria Embankment Gardens next to the work of a little boy like me? Yet that's just what he did once, in the days when public shows were authorized there."

"And was he as difficult as he seems to have been?"

"Of course he was difficult," Creffield said, *impatiently*. "He was difficult because he had standards! The one word I remember his using over and over was 'integrity.' " Creffield went on to recall an incident in which the painter Josef Herman—an artist who had settled in South Wales, where he created a group of pictures based on *the life of a mining village*—had once sent a potential buyer to Bomberg's studio. "Bomberg eventually threw this buyer out," Creffield said. "Even though Bomberg badly needed to sell,

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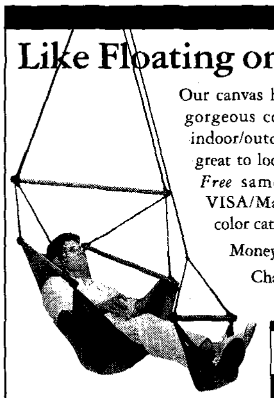

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he wouldn't sell to someone buying in the wrong way. Bomberg was the sort of person who would hang a whole exhibition and then take it down because something about it bothered him aesthetically."

"What about the fact that he was Jewish and of lower-class origin?" I asked. "Did that contribute to his neglect?"

"I very much doubt it," Creffield said. "In fact, all that may well have satisfied the English idea of the artist as a colorful oddball—a Gulley Jimson, if you will. Even for conventionally prejudiced people, the Jewish peculiarity was eminently acceptable in an artist. The problem was that Bomberg simply wouldn't compromise on his standards. He had deep puritanical anxieties about that sort of thing. Well, you might say that he was difficult, but you really don't have to be very difficult to be difficult, if you know what I mean. In the backward English art world of those days, Bomberg just didn't fit in. My God, man, for fifty years this great artist wasn't even mentioned in a foot-bloody-note! *He just didn't fit in!* "

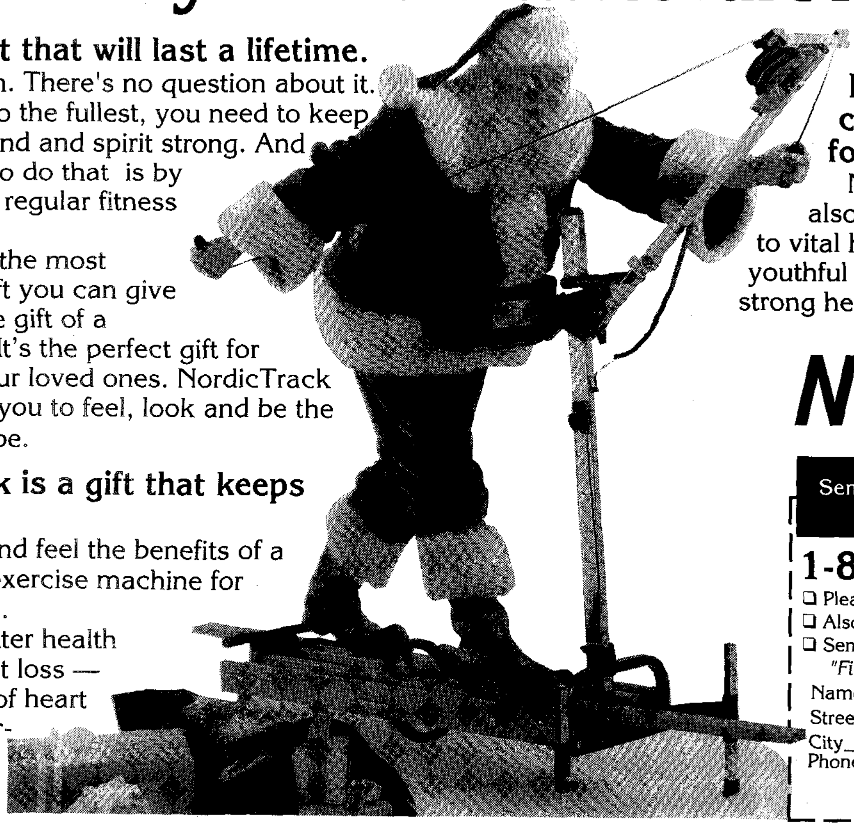
Creffield paused to eat some bread and cheddar. Then he said, "Another student of Bomberg's told me that Bomberg tried to help a refugee painter, who was apparently having a hard time, to get a job at Borough Polytechnic. He spoke to the principal about this painter, and the principal said, 'Well, send him along. I'll see what I can do.' A little while later, the principal got in touch with Bomberg and told him, 'The fellow has some very interesting ideas.' 'Really?' said Bomberg. 'What are those ideas?' The principal explained them to Bomberg, and Bomberg replied, 'If you employ that man, then I'm resigning.' "

Creffield concluded on a triumphant note, yet it struck me that he had just weakened his case. There is, to be sure, a kind of easy sociability, a good-natured tendency to yield or agree, to which serious artists will not stoop when aesthetic judgments are in play. Creffield was all primed up on this ethic, which had clearly been Bomberg's as well; the hitch was that the ethic did not seem to fit the situation. The principal's judgment might well have been deplorable, but the refugee had initially been Bomberg's candidate, so Bomberg had been under some obligation to vet him before proposing him for a job. Failing that, he was surely entitled to reverse his opinion, but to accompany the reversal with a threat was to exceed the norms of civilized conduct. Of course, neither Creffield nor I would ever really know the details of the case, but I couldn't help being impressed by the sheer cantankerousness of the brief that Creffield was holding for his former master.

Something in Creffield shied at being asked all these questions about Bomberg, and as he answered them his voice seemed to stifle some question of his own. "Now I'm going to ask you something," he said, finally. "Are you interested in Bomberg, or are you interested in me?"

I put down my glass of wine and swallowed my bread and cheese. "Both," I said. "I'm interested in both Bomberg and you."

"I've noticed that all your questions are about Bomberg," he snapped. "You've asked me far fewer questions about myself. And what I want to know is just what I asked. Why did you



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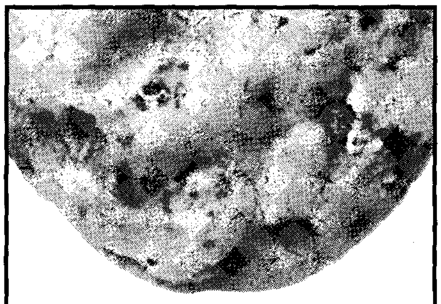

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come down here, anyway? Are you interested in Bomberg, or are you interested in me?"

Just then the sun came out over the Channel, lighting up half of Creffield's face, while the other half sank into darkness. The waves of the sea were tiny and innumerable, and seemed to move very slowly, like waves of mercury. Above them, the clouds rearranged themselves. It was a moment of pure embarrassment.

I said, "I'm interested in both Bomberg and you."

"Well, I think you should have told me that before you came down here," he replied sharply.

"I did tell you," I said.

"No, you did not."

I said very slowly to Creffield that I distinctly remembered calling him and telling him what my purposes were. At first, he recalled none of this, but after a moment his memory quickened, and he conceded that it was true. He fell silent, and disappointment shadowed his brow, for evidently I had failed to manifest that exclusivity of adherence—that heraldic allegiance to some person or camp—which he presumably required in people.

We lingered for a while over the wine and cheese, and then decided to go out for a walk on Brighton Pier. On the way downstairs, we passed Creffield's baby daughter asleep in a pram on a landing. The light was so finely filtered that the beautiful child's face seemed chiselled out of the air itself, and the angelic sight, like Creffield's powerful drawings, belied the dark picture of his life which he had so strenuously created for me. Apparently, he no longer saw me as an enemy or an interloper, and our chat, rid of contention, continued in a pacific vein that transparently bored him.

BY this time, it was certain that Charles Saatchi was going to give Leon Kossoff a major exhibition in November, and it was equally certain that Kossoff wasn't going to have anything to do with it. Saatchi already owned the paintings in question, so technically he didn't need Kossoff, and Kossoff had decided to avoid all social functions related to the show, and even to shun the premises of the Saatchi Collection. He never told me his reasons for this decision, but two suggested themselves. One was that he didn't feel that he was ready. The other was a

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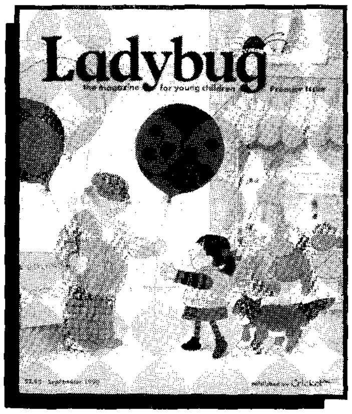
spectacular disclosure by Andrew Graham-Dixon, *The Independent's* art critic, that Saatchi had in the past six months sold off between seventy and a hundred paintings, or between ten and twelve per cent of his holdings. This huge divestment, with all that it implied about Saatchi's fickleness as a collector, had dismayed a lot of people in the London art world, and perhaps Kossoff was among them. In a sense, Saatchi stood to a painter like Kossoff in much the same way that the Broadgate complex stood to Christ Church, and the parallel was more than metaphorical: he was friendly with one of the directors of Broadgate, whose wife helped to handle public relations for the Saatchi Collection. The irony of the situation was that Kossoff, in the end, was indebted to Saatchi: though he might wish to avoid publicity, his paintings were meant to be shown, and Saatchi, whatever his failings, was showing them to the greatest advantage.

As the exhibition drew near, I kept in touch with Kossoff. It was clear that he was not disposed to meet with me again. Still, I wanted to see him—I was curious about his way of working—so I wrote him a letter in which I confessed that I had not completely understood what he had told me so far. This seemed to mollify him, and about two weeks before the show I received an invitation to his home.

Kossoff's street in Willesden is lined with houses of the "stockbroker Tudor" type, habitations for the most middle of middle-class people, but all the gentility stopped short of his foyer, which was barren of furniture and hung with pictures in progress. The ground floor of his house had been given over to painting, but the stacks of big, heavily reworked panels leaning against the soiled walls could not disguise the original identity of the rooms: there was a dusty pantry, a paint-besmirched sitting room, and so on. A defiantly anti-domestic air hung about the place, as if a rebellious son were methodically trashing a conventional suburban home. The sitting room, now Kossoff's studio, was breathtaking. Everything in this smallish lair—the panels, the floor, the tables, the buckets, rags, newspapers, palettes, even parts of the walls themselves—was so thickly covered with dark, glistening, clammy paint that the whole chamber resembled a mud man's cavern. I had already seen one photograph of it in a newspaper and another in a catalogue—in fact, it ranks as one of the London art world's most notorious sights—but I still couldn't prevent an exclamation from escaping my lips. Kossoff's reproving eyes bore down on me. "Too much has been made of this," he said briskly (though, obviously, only he could have authorized the photographs).

An easy chair in a particularly gloomy corner was reserved for his models. It was only about eleven in the morning, but one of them, he told me, had already come, posed, and gone. He evidently had the habit of rising very early and driving himself relentlessly till nightfall—a perseverance that smacked of the old-time family bakery. His labors seemed to entail the same tedium as a baker's, the same forced unsociability, the same anxiety over a life pursued at hours contrary to those observed by the rest of humanity. The whole point about bread, as he must have learned from his father, is that



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people want it every day: there is no possibility of missing a few hours of work, for a bakery that can't turn out bread with clockwork efficiency is really no bakery at all. Whatever the nature of his long and taxing relationship with his parents, Kossoff seemed to have carried this baking ethic into his production of paintings, and with it the baker's self-hectoring tempo, helpless belief in work for its own sake, and knowledge that he is both the slave of his mastery and the master of his slavery.

Together we scrutinized his recent efforts, making our way back into the shadowy recesses of the house until we came to a little room against whose walls four or five paintings of Christ Church were leaning, shouldering each other so closely that it was very hard to tell where one composition ended and another began. Clearly, Kossoff had finally got hold of his enigmatic subject and was knocking out one impassioned depiction after another. Though art writers tend to portray him as a dour, unhappy man, these paintings didn't seem sad at all; on the contrary, as I remarked to him, they emanated a naïve ebullience and humor.

"It's probably true that I used to be unhappy," he replied, "but that doesn't mean my pictures are about unhappiness. I think my pictures are about light—something that many people just don't seem to realize. They're about the outer light—the light of London, which I am trying to capture quite objectively—and also about an inner light. I'm trying, in a way, to light up the internalized parents within me, to empty myself of what was making me self-destructive."

His work did indeed gleam with the light of London—that shifty gray lustre that gnaws at the edges of things. But it also seemed to be about the power of line, a broad impulsive line that darted about the canvas trying to prove that the world could be summed up in a single long fidgety gesture.

"Well, I half hope one doesn't see any lines," he said, looking at me with vague horror. "Let's say marks, not lines!"

This wasn't very persuasive—his work was full of lines—but what did seem to be happening in the paintings of Christ Church was that the search for an adequate drawing had by dint of dragging paint through paint produced a grainy luminescence. The paintings looked very good, but they abutted each other in such an optically frustrating way that I just stood there squinting and cocking my head. "Oh, I've confused you with all my talk," Kossoff said, mistaking the cause of my perplexity. "I can see you're getting more and more confused."

After we had looked at the paintings for a while, he invited me upstairs for a cup of tea. The top floor of the house was a normal suburban interior, with scarcely anything—except for a few pictures—to betray a life spent in art. In a bookshelf beside the tea table I discovered a copy of the new Saatchi catalogue, with reproductions of Kossoff's paintings, among others. I asked him in what spirit he had managed to impose the final, triumphant coat on some of the bigger pictures, and how many hours of compositional invention they had required. But Kossoff had no idea how long they had taken him, since he generally worked in fits of desperation. "You have to understand that I simply don't know how I did those paintings," he said. "If I knew how to make more like that, I would." While he was talking, I handed him the catalogue, but he held it with perceptible reluctance, as though it might burn his fingers. He started to thumb through it but soon jibbed at this task and let its covers fly shut, with an exclamation of disgust.

We chatted for a while longer, but he refused to be further tempted into articulating his artistic aims. "Just try to be as brave in looking at my paintings as I try to be when I'm making them," he said. The words sounded pious, but he didn't look pious as he said them. He looked like someone with a hidden ailment who regrets having revealed the extent of his pain.

He saw me to the front door. "I expect you're totally confused now," he said contentedly. But very early the next morning—at just the hour when a baker might start to feel a little heavy on his feet—Kossoff called me on the telephone. "Just forget everything I said," he told me. "Talking about myself like that was dreadfully self-indulgent. Please forget everything."

ONE of the people I happened to quiz about David Bomberg was Sir Lawrence Gowing, who lives in a cluttered house in Fulham. Gowing is a tall, stuttering, bent figure in steel-rimmed glasses, with a pendulous lower lip and vividly veined large hands; he is also a superb writer on modern British painting and other aspects of art. A draper's son from the run-down borough of Hackney, he made a name for himself in the thirties as a talented tonal painter, and he has brought a painter's experience to the scrutiny of contemporary art. Gowing's insights are invariably so interesting—they draw one's eye to such crucial things—that it scarcely matters whether he is right or wrong, a fact of which he himself is probably not unaware. He writes of London painting with a heady enthusiasm, which does not carry over into his conversation. In person, he may rapidly grow reserved about a work he has praised in print—not, one suspects, out of meanness but out of a suddenly descending, slightly comical sobriety, like that of a man shaking off the effect of a good bottle of wine.

"Bombergism," he stammered out in his throaty voice, "has to do with instilling feeling into the paint patch, which is a confusion. There are few more dreadful reminders of mortality than the heavy Bombergian paint surface about a year after execution. There was a time, rather recently, when Bombergism reached epidemic proportions in our art schools, and with it came a strong dose of the Bombergian paranoia, which, like all paranoia, is contagious. I believe that any inquirer could soon satisfy himself that Bomberg was not in fact murdered by the English art world—this happened only in his imagination. It is true that his application to teach at one of our leading academies was turned down by its director—a sensitive man whom nobody ever accused of unkindness. During his last days, Bomberg summoned this director to his bed and said to him, 'I am the greatest painter in England. You have contrived my neglect, and now I am going to die.' The man was deeply upset by this, and was always overfair to Bomberg's students thereafter."

Later, sifting through the Bomberg correspondence in the Tate Archive, I discovered, to my surprise, abundant evidence of the keen interest that many discriminating persons had taken in Bomberg's work. The loyalty of his friend the academic painter Muirhead Bone was particularly touching—though one could sense Bone's grow-

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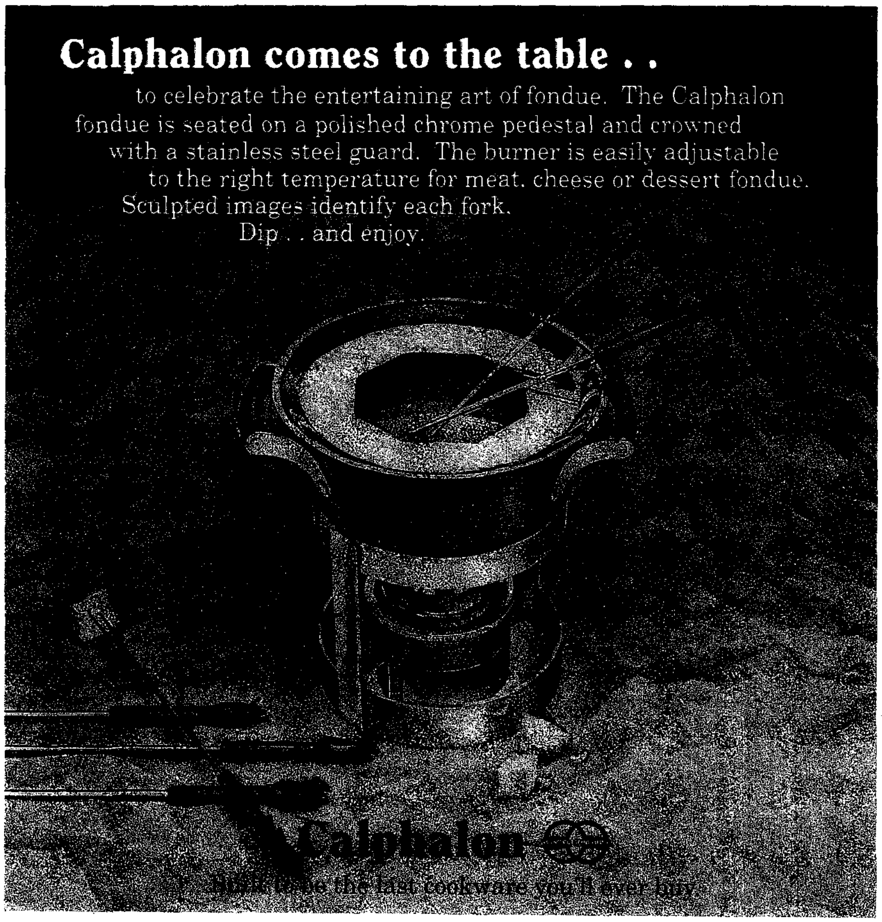

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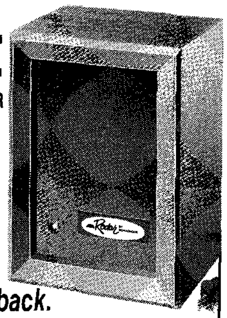
ing weariness with Bomberg's hopeless inability to get on in the world—and there were others who had given him moral support, and, at times, money. Kenneth Clark, first as the director of the National Gallery and then as the chairman of the War Artists' Advisory Committee, had turned down his appeals for patronage, but not even Clark's letters seemed unsympathetic. In May of 1938, he wrote Bomberg, who was then unemployed and without a gallery, "I am very sorry to know you have had such a long run of ill-luck. I wish I could help you more than I do, but as I have told you I feel bound to help other artists whose work appeals to me more strongly." The same day, Clark addressed a letter to the Artists' General Benevolent Association urging that relief be provided for Bomberg, "the merits of whose work have been generally allowed by all those capable of judging." When Bomberg applied for a job as a war artist, Clark—this time backed up by a committee—again turned him down, but probably on the ground that Bomberg's work was too subjective in style to aid in the documentation of the war effort; many distinguished non-illustrative artists, including Ivon Hitchens, Ben Nicholson, and Victor Pasmore, went unrepresented in the War Artists collection. In retrospect, the whole unhappy episode seems an everyday failure of connection, from which neither Clark nor Bomberg emerges with much egg on his face. (And, of course, the committee did eventually relent.)

Bomberg seems to have lacked any of the routine skills and wiles necessary to secure a job. At times, he applied to absurdly inappropriate employers, like Smith's Motor Accessories Works, the University of Pennsylvania, Alexander Korda, and Walter Gropius (who advised him to include pictures of his work with such applications). When one of his students provided him with a considerable sum to launch a high-class inn in the London neighborhood of Rosslyn Hill, he wasted months of precious painting time refurbishing a house, then left it one weekend in the care of an apparently pleasant couple, who stripped it. Such fecklessness boggles the mind, and suggests that Bomberg's vaunted moral refinement was allied to a hidden juvenility. A close friend once said of him, "One of the most characteristic things David



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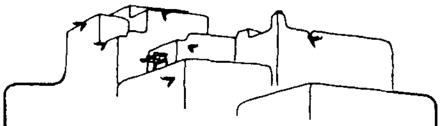

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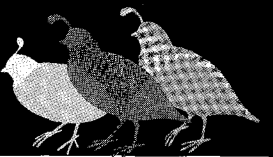

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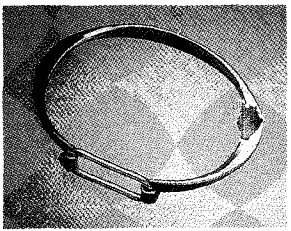

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ever told me was that he lacked ambition. He said he didn't need it; he knew success and acclaim were his due." In these words we hear unworldliness shading into vainglory: Bomberg evidently labored under the delusion, common among artists and the young at heart generally, that gifted people can sidestep necessity, while other, weaker souls are chained to their fates. Devoid of any Machiavellian perception of how society actually works, Bomberg seemed to believe that patronage runs, or might be expected to run, on the merit system, and thus fell into dejection when the art-world powers refused to accord him his just deserts. One is not surprised to discover that as a boy he was terrorized by his father, a compulsive gambler who suffered from paranoid delusions and would assault his wife and children when his luck was low. There is no need to enlist Freudian verities—or clichés, whichever they may be—to demonstrate the parallel between the little Bomberg's natural and never satisfied need for an unconditional paternal love and the grownup Bomberg's pathetic claim to a surpassing entitlement.

As Gowing suggested to me, there are problems with the best of Bomberg's art. Though his drawing was superb, his painting was hampered by a very limited repertory of marks, and his handling was often leaden in the shadows. His color ran toward meaninglessly overheated madders and oranges, yielding no sign that he had understood Matisse or any of the great twentieth-century French colorists. With such limitations, he was unwise to indulge his dream of greatness; lacking self-knowledge, he often wasted his talent and subjected his family to wretched tests of endurance. Yet Bomberg's brand of virtuous bloody-mindedness represents a common behavioral pattern: it seems to break out not only among his followers but also among a great many artistic types who have never had anything to do with him and could, indeed, be living anywhere in Britain—or on earth. In such people, the cult of "standards"—which claims to transcend individual ambition, and can even warrant a splendid self-sacrifice, like stalking off a job—masks a boundless and ruthless self-love. The standards invoked seem always to confirm one's own ideas and one's own work, and to uphold them is usually to throw oneself grandly into relief or to impugn the motives of a colleague.

But if Bomberg had clearly contributed to his own ruin, that was a far cry from saying he had caused it. There were, after all, his pictures, which, despite their failings, were superior to those of most of his contemporaries. There was something, too, in his very rebelliousness, his relentless contumacy, that compelled a grudging assent. It was an integral part of his artistic temperament, as diffidence was a part of Kossoff's and irascibility a part of Creffield's, and only a prig would be put off by what made them creative people. In the end, I began to feel, it would be impossible to arrive at a definitive explanation of Bomberg's neglect. For one thing, there is no commonly accepted notion of what neglect—which is, after all, the absence of something—concretely consists of. If you don't much care for Bomberg's work, for instance, then there was really no neglect at all. Gowing's response was of this order: he was an artist himself, and, as such, he hap-

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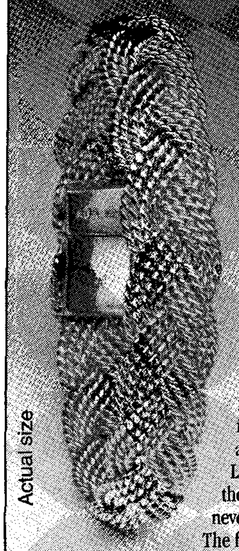

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pened to be viscerally repelled by Bomberg's handling of oil paint. Kossoff's view was quite different: though he plainly took Bomberg's part against the establishment, he had also felt obliged to resist and, later, to deny the influence of his former teacher. Creffield, for his part, nursed a personal rancor against the malignant forces that had betrayed his spiritual father. From Creffield son-of-Bomberg to Kossoff the Apostate, the various accounts of David Bomberg's martyrdom held all the makings of a permanent theological dispute.

ONE afternoon, I poked into Kitaj's café, and, sure enough, there he was, sitting under the specials board, scribbling on a yellow pad. He had on a blue-and-white checked shirt, in which he looked remarkably youthful, and his skin had assumed a rosy bloom, but he replied to my greeting with his usual litany: he was finished, lost, half dead, etc. Then I mentioned that I'd seen Kossoff, and he leaned forward expectantly. I told him about Kossoff slogging through the East End with the world on his shoulders. I told him about Kossoff slaving away in his grotto up in Willesden.

"Yes, well, these London guys have a certain aura," Kitaj said, *in a tempo* rather less halting than it had been a few weeks earlier. "I think that that aura comes in part from Giacometti. The circumstances of Giacometti's life are one of the sources—or, rather, the examples—of this behavior. It's the idea of the dungeon—to work all your life in a dungeon, even if you wind up being pretty successful. I myself used to be relatively unaffected by this. I wasn't as alone as these other guys are. I was the one person who tried to keep in touch with all the others in this strange London of ours. The rest of them pretty much stopped seeing one another. Maybe they felt they were growing older and couldn't spare the time, and there were various personal strains. But now I don't get out much anymore, either. Now I, too, keep to myself." He mused for a moment. "That dungeon thing—it's starting to happen to me," he said.

He stared into the middle distance and fetched a deep sigh. "I'm trying to paint my depression," he continued. "I'm working on a version of Dürer's Melancholia engraving—my interpretation is a kind of self-portrait in which

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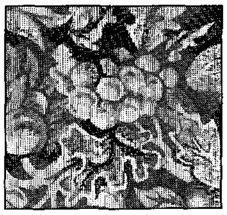

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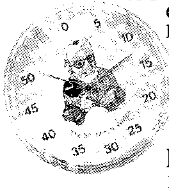

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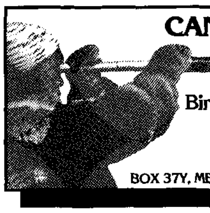
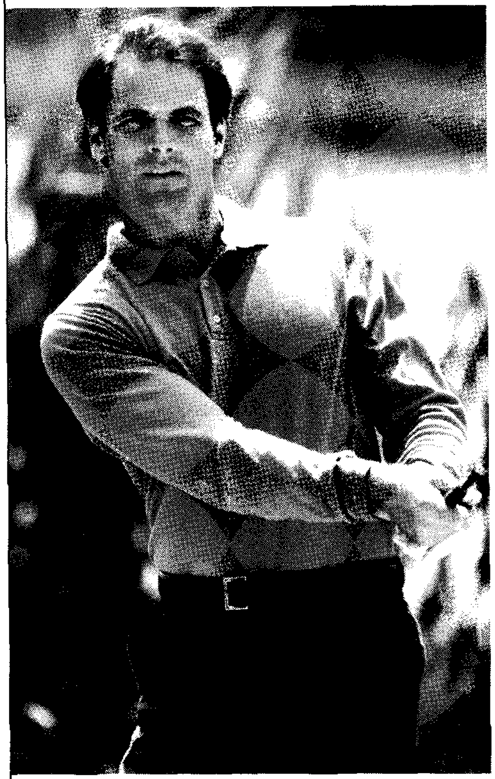


I'm holding my brush upside down. I even reread Panofsky on Dürer, but now I've forgotten what he said. Something about Dürer breaking away from the whole previous history of representing that illness."

Kitaj had remembered right. Some weeks later, when it had become clear that he was not only painting his depression but painting his way out of it, I looked up the famous engraving, along with Professor Erwin Panofsky's commentary. The picture shows a winged allegorical figure, her head propped dejectedly against one hand, surrounded by scientific tools and solid-geometry models; at her feet crouches the gruesome Black Dog, whose name has passed into British English as a synonym for depression. In his text Panofsky explains that Dürer was the first to treat the figure of Melancholia as a thinker, an artist, a person whose awareness of unreachable truths causes him spiritual affliction. The melancholic lives on a treadmill, searching and searching for answers that are not to be had.

Several months after that meeting with Kitaj, I received a letter from him. "I've been O.K. since Xmas," he wrote. "I've been working on a few pictures which are better than what you saw. They got more 'pictorial structure,' man! Hope that don't kill 'em. One is called 'The Heart Attack.' Maybe it's the first heart attack in the history of art! You ask: Am I addicted to paint once more? I think yes—*something* is starting up in these new pictures."

ON November 1st, the Kossoff show opened at the Saatchi Collection, together with an exhibition of the work of the sculptor Bill Woodrow. The Saatchi Collection is managed with integrity and efficiency by a professionally trained curator, but, as its name suggests, it isn't exactly a museum: it has no permanent installation, no explicit commitment to the public interest, and no trustees. Since its shows may be expected to boost the value of its holdings, it could be classified as an exalted art gallery, but such a view would be unjust, because there is no real evidence that Charles Saatchi's intentions are primarily mercenary. The Saatchi Collection is simply a vehicle sui generis for art display, and part of its novelty lies in difficulty of access, for it is situated far from the center of



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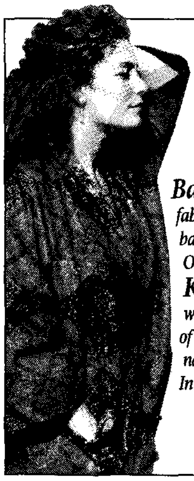

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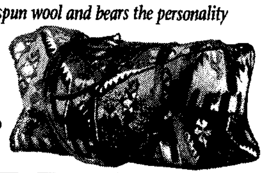

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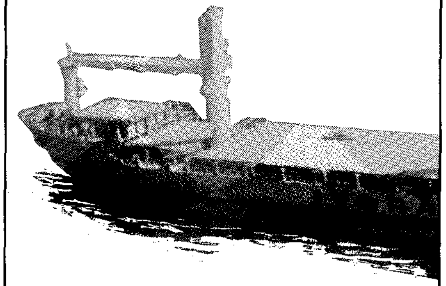

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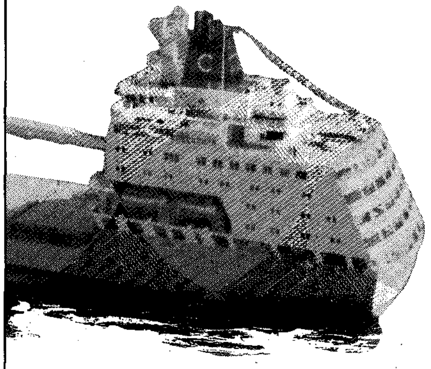

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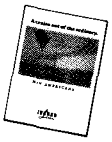

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London—in a remodelled warehouse off Boundary Road, in the posh inner suburb of St. John's Wood. It is not listed in the phone book, and its very entrance would be unposted but for a tiny nameplate beside a nondescript door. Passing through this door, and then a forecourt and another door, one enters a vast, airy, skylighted set of white halls. The transition is striking, and intentionally so: like some stuffy, self-sequestered noble household, the Saatchi Collection wants to proclaim its restraint, its indifference to the hurly-burly of competition. But, of course, this wish is duplicitous. In reality, the visitor feels that this pseudo museum ostentatiously overobserves a propriety: knowing that everywhere, and especially in London, the best way to court publicity is to shun it, the Saatchi Collection makes a point of its reticence. It represents an advertising man's conception of how not to advertise oneself.

Kossoff's paintings were hung in three huge rooms at the rear. I was the first to arrive at the exhibition's press preview, so I was alone with three black-clad servitors, who coasted toward me, each listing under the weight of his tray of champagne flutes and canapés. Laden with offerings, I began trying to connect Kossoff's pictures with their labels, each of which was distant from its painting by five or six yards. There were the fifteen paintings, hung so far apart that they totally failed to possess the allotted space; all of them could have been adequately displayed in any one of the three rooms. In Willesden, I had seen Kossoff's pictures edge to edge and could hardly make visual sense of them, but here his work was so sparsely sown on the staring white walls that the walls seemed to take precedence, reminding the viewer of the price of space in London and how the Saatchi Collection was wallowing in it.

Yet the pieces represented a sensitive selection of his work. The most striking was a figure picture from 1983, more than eight feet long, titled "Family Party." It showed a cluster of people in an arrangement resembling one of those arrays of carved apostles over a church portal, except that these folks were decidedly secular. At the center, where on a medieval tympanum Christ would have been enthroned, two children were petting a dog; above them a woman served snacks to a row of party zombies lolling in boredom. The image was linear, graphic, very English in its wry observations; it appeared to embody some reaction to the ennui of a family gathering—some fear, or wish, that a moment of total mortification might lie just ahead. Kossoff's way of putting it all together was riveting. His paint was like lava in playback—a substance that started out seeming viscous and clayey and then grew fiery as you looked at it. Thick skeins of paint lassoed the figures with breathtaking nonchalance, and one could feel how difficult it must have been for him to keep all the calligraphic and spatial invention going: any hesitancy in the interweaving of the various passages would have wholly disjointed the composition. It was a performance that edged right up next to the abyss of classic bad painting, and part of the flair and the fun of it lay in Kossoff's teetering attempts to keep it from degenerating into a slab of well-meaning mud.

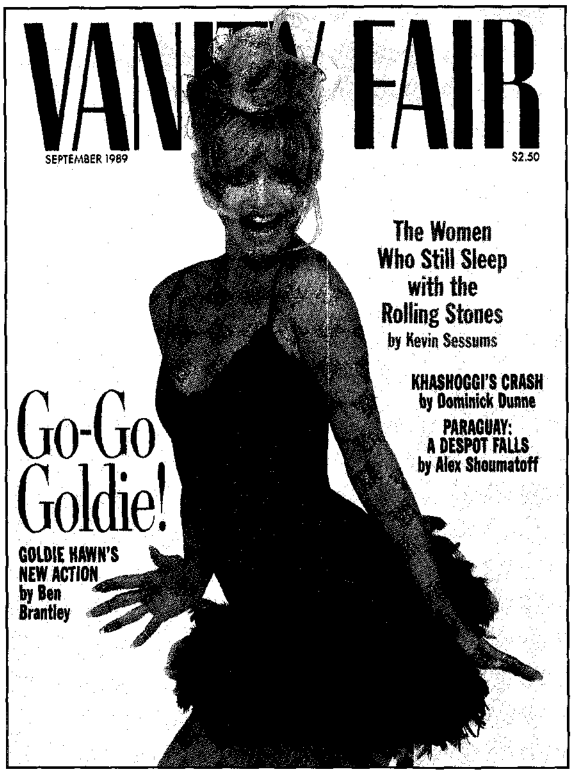
Before leaving the Saatchi Collection, I lingered for a while in front of Kossoff's "Double Self-Portrait," which consisted of a pair of square panels painted in lime green, gray, dull mauve, and black. The panels appeared to represent two discrete moments in their creator's existence: reading from left to right (as one inevitably did), one observed a rather cheery-looking fellow slumping into a posture of rodentlike confusion. The twitchy paint was so inventively brushed on that not one stroke followed any conventional or intellectual notion of form, and in each case one could not have said how such a clutter of pigment had ended up looking like a face at all. It was just following its own loopy logic; yet there, twice, was a man, looking out.

The double self-portrait was so alive that it seemed for a moment that Kossoff himself must be somewhere in the room, which had by now filled up with people. But, of course, that was impossible. Artists do not generally attend press previews of their work, and, in any case, Kossoff had declared his intention to stay clear of the exhibition.

No, he wasn't here—that much was certain. He was probably off in his dungeon, doing whatever it was that dungeon people did, and doubtless having a grand old miserable time of it.

—Dan Hofstadter

SHOWTIME!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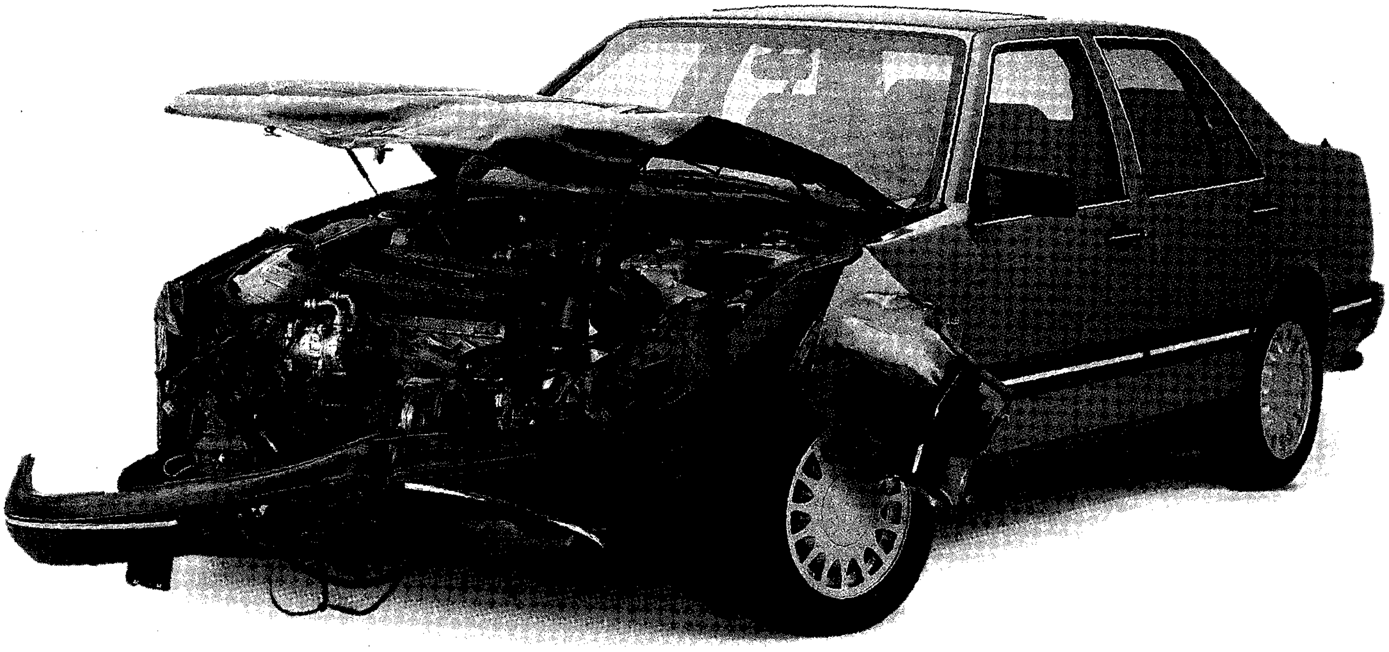

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Magic is a mind-expanding art form because it demonstrates that the boundaries of perception aren't necessarily the boundaries of reality.—*Jay Scott Berry, California magician, at the Fifty-third Annual Magic Get-Together, Colon, Michigan, 1990.*

COLON, MICHIGAN, is the magic capital of the world. You know that's true because the sign at the village limits says so:

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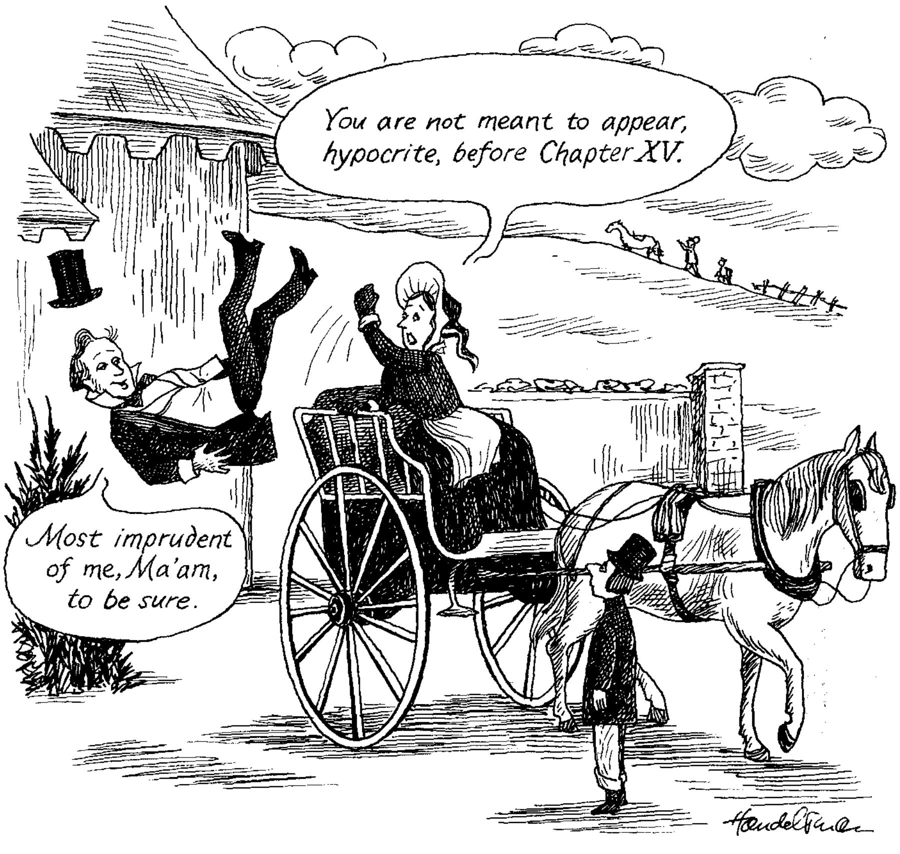
Colon is a village of eleven hundred people in southwestern Michigan, in flat prairie farmland. It is a village of two-story Victorian houses and smaller, modest ones, each nestled into an ample, well-tended yard, and there are gardens big enough to grow sweet corn two blocks from the intersection of the two main roads, State Street and Blackstone Avenue. The avenue is named for Colon's most famous past resident, Harry Blackstone, the magician: Blackstone the Great, né Henry Boughton, who came there in 1926, and for whom it was home, as much as any place could be for a travelling entertainer. It has more parks than anything else, and maple trees—big, overarching ones—really do grow on Maple Street. And there is not a place in the village where you can't hear the cooing of mourning doves on a summer day.

Colon is also the home of Abbott's Magic Manufacturing Company, founded by Percy Abbott, an Australian magician, in 1934, a few years after a Blackstone-Abbott magic company, started in 1927, failed, and Blackstone and Abbott had a falling out. With a million dollars in annual sales, made mostly through a three-pound mail-order catalogue, Abbott's is the biggest magic manufacturer in the world, according to the present owner, Greg Bordner. And for a time in late summer of each year since the nineteen-thirties there have been more magicians around Colon than anywhere else on earth. The occasion is the Magic Get-Together, co-sponsored by Abbott's and the Colon Lions. Magicians are a clubby lot and hold other meetings, but those are usually in big cities. According to Harry Blackstone, Jr., a magician in his own right, the Get-Together is the meeting that all magicians look forward to, because of the rural setting and the air of sociability. A thousand magicians, perhaps a few more—some full-time performers, the rest part-timers and amateurs—come to Colon from around the world, and take over the village. For twenty years now, Blackstone himself has been coming back to his home town (he went to school here for a year or two, and still owns a bit of land on what is called Blackstone Island, in Sturgeon Lake).

I grew up in Kalamazoo, about twenty-five miles to the northwest as the crow flies. I was the easiest kid in the world to fool; for a while, I cherished the notion that I had a head full of nickels, because my father could produce them so easily from my ears. In those days, I was a pushover for the public performances held in Colon in the evenings during the Get-Togethers. I can remember the aura of those evening shows, shows that I attended forty years ago and more: the dark stage, the bright colors, flowers, floating scarves, capes in black and red, and the daring, slightly wicked quality of dying vaudeville.

This past August, I decided to pay a nostalgic visit to Colon to see what happens when a thousand magicians come to town. It was the Fifty-third Annual Magic Get-Together. Colon may be only twenty-five miles from Kalamazoo, but in order to get there I had to take out a map and look up which turns to take on state and county roads—a process lending substance to a

ALTERNATIVE DICKENS


You are not meant to appear, hypocrite, before Chapter XV.
Most imprudent of me, Ma'am, to be sure.

MY AUNT'S LEFT HOOK EXPELS URIAH FROM THE CHAISE

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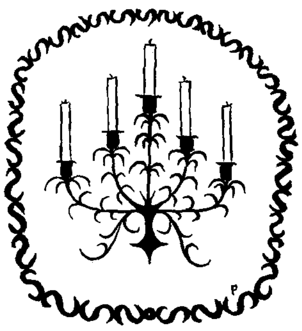
conceit that Bordner and Blackstone like to maintain in interviews, that Colon is like Brigadoon, a hard-to-find place that disappears except during Get-Together time. I had known Harry Blackstone when we were both eighteen, and, seeing him recently in California, where he lives, I had asked him what growing up in Colon was like. "Shades of gray," he said, with a sigh. I knew what he meant. When I was growing up, I was under the impression that the sun vanished in October and was not seen again by humankind until May. The weather, blowing in from Lake Michigan, was bleak, cold, damp, and dark for much of the year.



On the first day of the Fifty-third Get-Together, however, Michigan was at its winsome best. It was a clear, sunny, high-pressure day, with blue skies and fluffy white clouds, and the corn was greening in the fields. In the village, I parked under a shady tree, because Tazzie, my dog, was with me. I walked over to the Abbott plant, a low cement-block building that would look like a radiator-repair shop if it were not painted black with white skeletons dancing across its front. I passed a knot of people on the street. "How d'ya like this?" a man was asking. He shook his wrist, and bright-red carnations bloomed from his fingertips. The members of his tiny audience nodded, smiled, and applauded. Inside the Abbott office I picked up my registration papers. I've never quite recovered from being fooled about those nickels, so I had paid the full professional fee, seventy-five dollars, to be allowed to attend not only the four public evening shows but also the dealers' showrooms and the workshops, lectures, and demonstrations. In my envelope of materials I found a plastic badge with my name on it and a cord attached, and I hung it around my neck to separate myself from the ordinary citizens of Colon. I peered inside the Abbott showroom. It was a dark room with creaky wooden floors, and its walls and ceiling were covered with magicians' posters, including one of the senior Blackstone, backlit to emphasize his aureole of white hair. The room was lined with glass cases that looked like old-fashioned candy-display counters but were filled with magic tricks, and in the center of the room an Abbott employee was putting on a magic show, mostly for children.

It was only ten in the morning, but magicians were already arriving in town, many of them in vans and oversized campers. Colon has no hotels, no motels, no inns. Some of the magicians camp out in the parks, but more rent rooms or houses from the residents. And many pairings of guest and landlord have stayed the same over the years, giving the Get-Together a mixed quality, of friendship and cash crop. Yard sales were springing up all over town, and I talked to the proprietor of one. She told me she was renting out a room to a magician couple who had been staying with her each August for the past ten years. "When my husband was alive, we used to rent out nearly every room in the house, and all our outbuildings, too," she said. "Haven't done that since he's been gone. But I've been thinking about all the campers that come these days. I guess I'll get me a batch of Porta Pottis next year and set them up and rent out the yard."

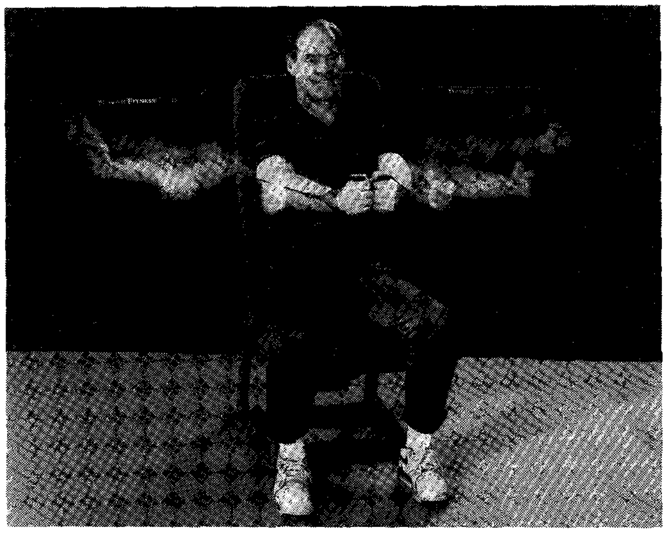
I walked up State Street, where all the merchants had stencilled signs in their windows that said "WELCOME MAGICIANS" alongside posters for a circus that was coming to nearby Three Rivers later in the month, and out along the creek, past the dam that makes Palmer Lake. Beyond the dam I found the elementary school, where many of the activities were to take place. Just inside the school door, a uniformed security guard with a big smile was checking every plastic badge. The school gym and a couple of classrooms were filled to overflowing with magic wares and books, in odd contrast to the little desks and sober blackboards, and magicians were busily taking over rooms for workshops, demonstrations, and sales booths.

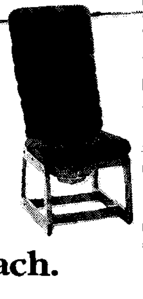
The magicians—most of whom were men—talked magic, passed out business cards, did magic, passed out business cards, bought magic, passed out business cards, demonstrated gimmicks, passed out business cards. "Gimmick" is a magicians' word that has entered everyday language. It refers to that device or object—that invisible wire, false fingertip, hidden lever—which makes the magic possible. Magicians use other words specially. Scarves are called "silks." "Disappear" and "vanish" are transitive verbs, as in "I vanished the ball" and "He disappeared the girl." "Tricks" are small pieces of magic—the silk that turns into a dove, the cut and knotted rope that mends itself. "Illusions" are big pieces of magic. Illusions are pricey; they can cost many thousands of dollars. Abbott's has made many of them over the years, some to order: Houdini's underwater torture box; Blackstone's buzz saw; David Copperfield's straitjacket; the device that disappeared an elephant, for which Abbott's furnished everything except the elephant. One whole wall of the gym was covered with a display of books: "How to Sell by Magic," "Nite Club Illusions," "Conjurors' Psychological Secrets," and so on. Heaped on shelves along another wall were Abbott's offerings: Dove Through the Glass ($135), Elusive Bunny Box ($100), Mirror Tumbler ($5), Disecto ($90), and more objects in Day-Glo colors and shiny metal than I could take in.

Greg Bordner was standing near the Disecto, expansive, cheerful, busy. A handsome, athletic-looking man in his late thirties, he is a political-science graduate of Michigan State, and the son of Recil Bordner, a magician who was Percy Abbott's partner after Abbott broke with Blackstone. Versions of the cause of the split vary, but all agree that the two men, both strong-willed, clashed over the financial end of the business, and that Blackstone, the bigger of the two, came over to Abbott's house one night, beat him up, and stalked out. According to Bordner, Abbott called the police, and when they arrived Blackstone walked back in and greeted Abbott like an old friend—"Hi, Percy, it's been a while. Good to see you"—thus flummoxing the police. But, Bordner said, Blackstone stayed so angry that whenever he saw Abbott in the grocery store he would pull canned goods off the shelves and hurl them at him. He also tried to start a rival magic show and manufacturing company, and refused to perform for the Abbott Get-Together until 1961, when he was seventy-five. Though his skills were failing, he came from California to perform in a sentimental return; when he died, in 1965, his ashes were buried in the cemetery at Colon, where they lie under a stone that appears to be part flower, part flame. According to Bordner, more magicians—around a dozen—are buried in that cemetery, along with Blackstone, than anywhere else in the world.

I asked Bordner about the Disecto, and, confiding that he was only a fourth-rate magician, he got it out. It looks like a simple wooden stand with a big hole in the center and two little holes above and below. At the top is a sharp-looking knife that raises and lowers like a cleaver. The cleaver slices through carrots placed in the little holes. Bordner put his arm in the big hole and dropped the cleaver. His hand was just fine when he pulled it out. I gasped. I couldn't help myself. "How did you do that?"

Bordner grinned and said, "The trick's told when the trick's sold." He invited me on a tour of his empire, and we went back to the Abbott building. Behind the display room was a dark, Dickensian stockroom lined with





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drawers bearing labels like "Rabbit Wringer" and "Flower Surprise." There orders were being filled for Sweden and Japan. We walked past a set of sinks where silks are dyed and the staff makes coffee, then went downstairs to a room where a woman was making magical silk flowers, stitching away and listening to country music on the radio. Outside again, Bordner put a big box of outgoing mail in the back seat of his Chevy ("The magic business isn't what it used to be. My father drove a Buick") and drove me over to the workshop, a nondescript blue-and-white metal building on the edge of town, next to the supermarket. Except for a preponderance of rabbits, it looked like an ordinary wood-and-metal shop. Tacked to the walls were snapshots of magician customers, including one of a Nigerian prince who once came, with an entourage, to the Get-Together. He placed a big order for illusions and had them shipped home. Bordner shook his head over the prince. "He billed himself as someone who had Powers," he said. Bordner doesn't approve of Powers; he doesn't like to associate magic with the paranormal. He made a face. "Hey, this is just a business. We manufacture tricks and illusions. I know the U.P.S. rates anywhere."

I very much wanted to buy a trick. Back at the elementary school, I asked around about the gimmick used for one of the world's oldest recorded magic tricks. In the Bible, in Exodus, we are told how Aaron so impressed Pharaoh with wonders and magic that Pharaoh let the people of Israel leave Egypt. Aaron showed Pharaoh a rod and changed it into a snake. Pharaoh called his magicians, and they also turned rods into snakes, but then Aaron caused his snake to eat up theirs. Bordner laughed when I asked him about it, and said he didn't have a trick like that. "Maybe one of the snake handlers could help you," he added. He looked around the gym-salesroom, but couldn't spot a snake handler at the moment. I moved on to another salesman, who was doing impossible things with what looked like a solid hoop of gleaming metal. It became a square, then a flat strip. "Oh, yeah, I know that trick," he said when I asked. "I got a wand that turns into a snake, but it's not a very good snake. I mean, it isn't a python or a cobra, or anything." I watched a New Age magician, Jay Scott Berry, who was dressed in black and had long, curly blond hair, produce a brilliant flash of light from his fingertip: "Uses no batteries." Then he transformed a rainbow-colored bar into gold.

"Ummm!" said a watching magician. "That's smooth."

"Ye-ahh," said Berry, changing from entertainer into salesman. "I worked a long time to get it so smooth." He was monopolizing the crowd, to the chagrin of a Japanese magician at the next booth, who smiled bravely as he plucked fire from the air and lit a fire in the palm of first one hand, then the other.

I settled for a trick called the Amazing Keybender ("Yes, you can bend keys and spoons"), which I bought from Abbott's for five dollars. It is a small, simple gimmick, and comes with three pages of directions which include the plea "All we ask is that you do not claim to have supernatural powers," and add archly, "One doing that is enough"—a prim reference to Uri Geller. I practiced the trick at home after the Get-Together, but no one applauded. "What do you have up your sleeve?" my stepson asked at my first and only family performance. That brings me to the basic secret of magic: the gimmicks are simple, but the tricks are hard, and require impressive skills and dexterity, and a keen sense of psychology for misdirecting the audience's attention. Every evening during the Get-Together, there was a public show, and during the day spontaneous shows never stopped: a thousand magicians showing off to a thousand magicians, receiving and giving applause and appreciation. They all knew the gimmicks. What they were applauding was the skill in their use, the quick hands and sly diversions, the breaking apart of cause and effect, forcing the senses to trick the brain.

COLON grows weirder and weirder. Everywhere magicians' vans are parked. Magicians nap in folding chairs. Magicians sell magic to one another. Magicians sit on curbs and throw their voices, so that trash cans begin to twitter like birds. At the counter of the M & M Grill, a stocky man in glasses hits his hand on the counter—*whack! whack!*—disappearing fuzzy balls every time. His companion nods appreciatively while he eats his cheeseburger. There would be applause from the booth behind them, except that one of the six magicians sitting there has the attention of the rest, asking them to pick a card from the fan of cards he holds in his hand. Jugglers fill the parks. I talk to a young juggler named Steve. "I do magic, too, but I prefer juggling," he says. "There are lots of jugglers around these days, because we had parents who were hippies who took up juggling; it was supposed to represent psychic balance, or something. We don't go in for that stuff, but we learned how to juggle from them. I'd like to get a job on a cruise ship or work in a theme park." Theme-park magicians, I learn at an afternoon workshop, are paid seven hundred dollars a week, and must do five shows a day, six days a week. Cruise ships pay from four hundred dollars a week to eighteen hundred; the occupational hazard is weight gain from good food.

Waiting for the evening performance, in the high-school auditorium, I take Tazzie out for a romp in the meadow behind the high school. She leaps from the car and begins running joyous circles around a young, sinister-looking man with punked hair dyed flat black, who is wearing black pants, slightly pegged, and a black shirt—the preferred dress of young magicians. With him is a savage-looking girl with purple makeup and a mane of black hair, who is wearing a black leather miniskirt. They squat down and scratch Tazzie on the belly, transforming themselves into teen-agers. A clown is working out on a unicycle in the school-bus parking lot. Tazzie finds gopher holes to dig out, and I lie down in the clover, listening to the doves and the katydids. Overhead, swallows circle and swoop. How do they do that?

Later, inside the auditorium, women in sequinned gowns float in the air. One, to the amusement of the audience, refuses to be sawed in two and forces the magician to take her place inside the specially designed box. Ropes cut and heal themselves, and knots in them slide and disappear. Needles are stuck into balloons without popping them. Coins multiply. Cards are chosen and told. Silks appear from nowhere. A thousand magicians and six or seven hundred other spectators cheer and applaud under a banner celebrating the Class D Baseball Championship. (The team is called the Magi; its mascot is a white rabbit coming out of a hat.) The

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seats are hard and cramped, the sound system crackles and occasionally fails, but the performances are slick, smooth, very Big Time, paced for television. Last year's young-talent-contest winner has been invited back for a segment of an evening show: he presents a display of leggy girls, dancing, and other flourishes that looks as though he had MTV in mind. Other magicians use backdrops with their names in flashing lights and work to a rock-and-roll beat. Blackstone's segment is filmed for a TV show to be broadcast next spring. Magicians from Switzerland and Czechoslovakia are featured, calmer and wittier than the Americans, who are from a vaudeville tradition. A contingent of Indians comes into the auditorium, the women dressed in saris. I ask a gray-haired matron with an empty seat beside her if it is taken. "It's my husband," she says. "I vanished him."

ONE morning, I dropped in on the Vent-O-Rama. Ventriloquists call themselves "vents," and the Vent-O-Rama is a workshop for them. Ventriloquism has long been a part of the Get-Together. Edgar Bergen was born in nearby Dowagiac, and sometimes attended the Get-Together with Charlie McCarthy and Mortimer Snerd. "The *Pythonists* spake hollowe; as in the bottome of their bellies, whereby they are aptlie in Latine called *Ventriloqui*," Reginald Scot wrote, in 1584, in "The Discoverie of Witchcraft," which is said to be the oldest surviving text on magic tricks. Not only does Scot discuss ventriloquism; he says that if one is not a "sluggard," a "niggard," or a "dizzard" one can learn to perform "Magicke," and proceeds to give detailed directions. While reading that four-hundred-year-old handbook, I was pleased to note that my father had been no dizzard: his nickel-from-the-ear trick is detailed by Scot under the heading "Of conveiance of monie." It is done by "palming," the word that magicians use to describe the way to hold a coin, card, or other small object hidden between the fingers or on the back or front of an apparently empty hand. You and I don't have muscles trained to do that, but they do. ("This is hard," said Doug Anderson at an afternoon workshop, as he demonstrated how to make a coin appear to jump straight up from his motionless hand. "It was painful to learn how to squeeze my palm muscles. Broke some blood vessels, too.")

Scot's may be the oldest handbook of magic tricks, but conjuring, or trickster magic, has an even older history. Aaron and the Egyptian magicians with their wand-snakes were not the only ones in antiquity to use gimmicks. (Aaron's most famous trick, making a rod bloom with flowers—by which he established the preëminence of the tribe of his brother, Moses, over the eleven other tribes of Israel—can be found in the Abbott mail-order catalogue: the Flower Wand, under "Flowers that bloom WITH a spring, tra la!," for four dollars.) What is thought to be the first self-moving vehicle was designed by Hero of Alexandria, an engineer who flourished around the beginning of the first millennium. It was used to make gods and goddesses move upon their altars, revolve, and produce milk and wine as if by miracle. Egypt, Greece, Persia, Rome, China, and India all had magicians, and some of their tricks—Cups and Balls and the Hindu Rope Trick, to name two—are part of modern magicians' stock-in-trade.

The morning I was at the Vent-O-Rama, the principal vent had a cold and a sore throat, so he asked the vents perched on tables and chairs around the classroom to volunteer. Almost before the words were out of his mouth, a young woman with red hair called out "Me . . . me . . . me!" and ran to the front of the room with two oversized stuffed toys. (Magicians are not shy. Boffo routine in the evening show: The m.c. says, "Tonight, we have the world's greatest magician with us. Will he stand up, please?" A thousand magicians leap to their feet, and everyone applauds.) I watched the red-haired ventriloquist as her stuffed toys carried on a lunatic conversation with her. Her mouth didn't move; her throat muscles didn't even quiver. How does she do it? When she returned to her seat, amid applause, to give way to the next performer, she regained our attention momentarily, and received some appreciative chuckles, by throwing her voice to the front of the room.

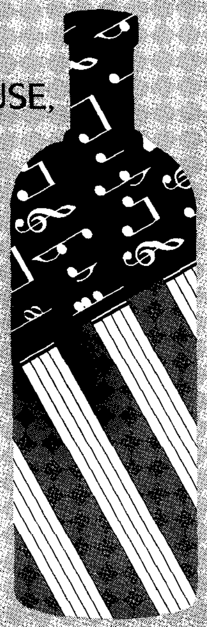
IN the village, the good people of Colon were busily turning goods and services into dollar bills. In the general store, a troupe of young magicians was buying cotton balls. "Gonna have a new opening tonight,” one of the women said. And, sure enough, that evening I saw those mundane cotton balls deftly appear and disappear between outstretched fingers.

I talked to Bob Kolb, the owner of Magic City Hardware, who is active in the Chamber of Commerce.

“You bet the Get-Together is good for the economy,” he told me. “People rent out their houses. Some people even leave town for vacation and turn their houses over to the magicians. There are some real little houses here, and I’ve seen maybe ten magicians in a single one of them. Then, there are the fund-raisers. The Lutherans put on a big lunch, and the magicians like it, because they don’t charge big-city prices. I sell the magicians nuts and bolts to fix their campers, and some big-ticket items, too. And then there are the merchants’ sidewalk sales— How am I going to put this? We all have some stock. . . . Now, it isn’t bad merchandise, it’s just that folks in Colon haven’t bought it all year. These magicians come from all over—California, New York, Canada—and their tastes are, um, different, so we sell it to them. We unload a lot of stuff that way.”

Craft sales began to appear among the yard sales. Soon it seemed that every third house had something for sale: wrought-iron trivets, odd dinner plates, hand-painted ceramics, little wooden benches, children’s outgrown clothes, plastic purses. Curbside-parked cars had “For Sale” signs in their windows. Amish had driven in from farms in their buggies and were racing around town to snap up the best bargains before the magicians could get to them.

Having attended the Vent-O-Rama, I had missed the magicians’ buffet lunch at the Lutheran church, a handsome new, sprawling building on the outskirts of the village, right next to the Enchanted Glen Apartments. Instead, I went over to the Grange Hall, on Blackstone Avenue, for the Pig Roast. Inside the hall were long tables covered with oilcloth. A motherly-looking woman served me barbecue, baked beans, two homemade molasses cookies, and a cup of iced tea, for three dollars and ten cents. This was a fund-raiser. It was the first time the Grange had put one on, she told me. “Some years back, the Lutherans used to serve dinner every evening during the Get-



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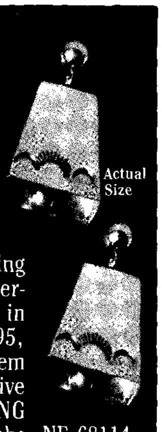

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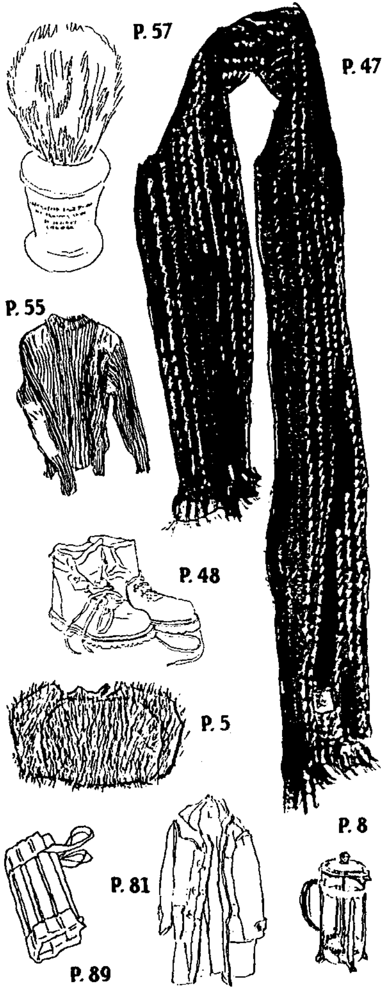

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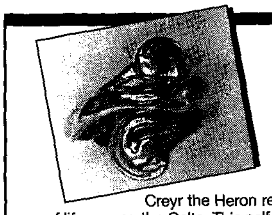

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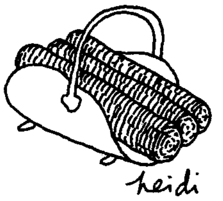
AFTER a whole day of magic and a three-hour evening performance, the magicians, their attention sharpened, tingling from their own applause, are high on magic, and reluctant to end the day. When the tourists (some three thousand of them paid to see the public shows during the week) have driven away, the magicians return to the Abbott showrooms for auctions of magic equipment, or they go over to the American Legion Hall, on State Street. I drop in at the hall about midnight. It is stuffed with magicians drinking beer, eating fries, laughing, and showing off. A T-shirted magician moves from table to table performing what I have learned to call closeup magic. He is applauded as he moves a safety pin from one corner of a square of red flannel to another without unpinning it. I find a place at a table with a group recalling their days on the road.

"D'you remember the night at the motel when we took the ice out of the ice machine and stuffed Ed inside?"

"Yeah. Remember the look on the face of that little old lady when she opened the machine door and he handed her a bucketful of ice?"

"Hey, how about the time in the hotel in Kentucky when we took the furniture out of our room and put it in the elevator, so that it looked like a sitting room, and rode up and down in it reading newspapers and watching the faces of the guests when the door opened for them?"

"Where was it that we filled up the motel swimming pool with Knox gelatin?"



The laughter grows louder; the air is thick with cigarette smoke, magic, and fellowship. At 2 A.M., the American Legion will close its doors and force the magicians out onto the street. They tell me about the young Doug Henning, seventeen or eighteen years old and unknown, who wandered around town one night after the hall closed until he found a twenty-four-hour laundromat, the only public building with lights still on, and did magic tricks for his friends until dawn. His later fame has assured that it will forever be known as the Doug Henning Laundromat. Some years ago, they tell me, there was still enough of a crowd on the streets at 3 A.M. to respond to the request "Pick a card any card." And, just as someone in the small audience did so, and looked expectantly at the magician to identify it, a heavyset man lurched toward the spectators, stumbled on the curb, and fell. Several men reached out to help him up, and as he regained his feet his pants slithered to his ankles to reveal baggy undershorts with the card printed large upon them.

As the week progresses, there is far more magic on and off the streets of Colon than I can take in. The wild mourning doves are reproduced onstage in the white doves that flutter from silks, flowers, hats. A man balances a hundred and thirty-five cigar boxes on the end of his chin. Wands shoot confetti, and it settles in our hair. White bunnies are everywhere. Street musicians play. A lank-haired man in a polo shirt walks down State Street tossing up balls, and they vanish high in the air. "Hey, I like it. I like it," his companion says, slapping his knee. One evening, Harry Blackstone re-creates one of his father's most famous performances. Taking a lighted lamp, with a stagily long electric cord, offered to him by his assistant—his wife, Gay—he removes the bulb. On the dim stage, the bulb remains shining eerily in his hand. He then apparently releases it, and it hovers dreamily about him in the darkness. He sends it, glowing, down to the front rows of the audience, where he invites spectators to touch it and reassure themselves of its substance. When a doubter farther back in the auditorium calls out, Blackstone says, with a smile, that he will send the bulb out to him. Luminous, spectral, the bulb—a mere light bulb, made lovely and strange by behaving in a way that no mundane light bulb should—drifts gently out over the audience and then soars back to its master, who returns it to the lamp. And I understand that I have never really seen a light bulb before.

One hot afternoon, I take Tazzie down past the dam to a little creek that runs from it. Tazzie wades into the water while I sit on the grassy bank and watch a pair of tiger swallowtails circle in the air above me. A pretty little girl with curly chestnut-colored hair comes walking down the bank from one of the houses nearby. "What's your dog's name?" she asks.

"Tazzie. What's your name?"

"Jessie. You know what?"

"What?"

"I'm four years old. Can Tazzie do tricks?"

"Not really. She likes to take rocks out of the water, though." I point to Tazzie, hard at work loosening from the bottom of the stream a rock much too big for her.

"Well, I can do a trick."

"You can?"

"Yes. I can put my head under water." And—hey, presto!—she does. Carefully pinching her nostrils, Jessie puts at least half an inch of her face into the water and very quickly pulls it out. She looks at me, expectant, proud. I applaud. —SUE HUBBELL

•

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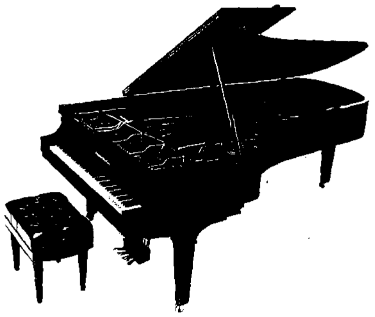

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THE THEATRE

Gershwins' Return

TO get the complaint over with immediately, George Gershwin's score and Ira Gershwin's lyrics for "Oh, Kay!," and the spirit and dancing and singing of the black company that David Merrick has assembled for his revival, at the Richard Rodgers, are so glorious that it is nearer a crime than a pity that so many of the words are lost or crushed in the damnable din of amplification. In the program notes, Arnold Goland, who did the orchestration, is quoted as saying, "People today are used to amplification, and if they walked into a theatre and heard what audiences were hearing years ago, they'd probably think it sounded skimpy." To which this member of the audience replies "Horsefeathers!" Gershwin's music even on two pianos would fill any theatre, at home or abroad.

End of complaint. "Oh, Kay!," with a book by P. G. Wodehouse and Guy Bolton, was originally done here in 1926. It starred Gertrude Lawrence, whose recorded voice in my memory, singing "Do, Do, Do" and "Someone to Watch Over Me," still permeates the overture. The book has been adapted by James Racheff to a concept by the director, Dan Siretta. The time is still the twenties, but the settings are now a night club in Harlem, rife with bootleggers, and the town house of a wealthy, lighthearted, and high-living fellow named Jimmy Winter, a couple of whose wives are already on the way out. The night club is raided by the police, and the bootleggers take refuge in Winter's house, bringing along cases of their booze and also their beautiful leading lady, Kay Jones, who is the heroine of the occasion. Occasion is what it really is; the book is slapdash, but serviceable enough for one of the most joyous performances to be seen locally in years.

YOUR FACE IN STONE
P. Steiner

Synopsis is out of the question. Herewith, then, are some notes and observations at random. Brian Mitchell is an ideal choice for Jimmy Winter, a true leading man, and it is interesting to note the vestiges of Wodehouse in this debonair fellow, in and out of one jam after another. Angela Teek's Kay is Wodehousean, too—bold and pretty and resourceful. That both of them can sing and dance well goes without saying. Or almost without saying: that Miss Teek chose to belt out "Someone to Watch Over Me" seems a mistake, since that is one of the most romantic and private songs ever written, but Mr. Mitchell sets matters right when he reprises it soon after. Mr. Siretta was the choreographer as well as the director, and I don't see how any choreographer can have been rewarded with more satisfying dancers. One of the high points is a dance to "You've Got What Gets Me" (unfamiliar to me) by funny, insidious Gregg Burge with his partner, who is called just Kyme. Kevin Ramsey, whose slight resemblance to Malcolm X does him no harm, performs a wonderfully subtle jazz dance with the ensemble to "Clap Yo' Hands," which brings down the first-act curtain in an electrifying way. The beginning of the second act is no letdown; it is set on Jimmy Winter's terrace in bright sunshine, with the buildings of Harlem behind it—the perfect place for all manner of shenanigans. The shenanigans, by the way—with chubby Helmar Augustus Cooper, club manager disguised as butler, as the ringleader—almost invariably pay off.

Among the splendid performers I haven't mentioned (as good as those I have) are Stanley Wayne Mathis, who enlivens the stage with the ensemble in "Fidgety Feet"; Tamara Tunie Bouquett, as a wife of Jimmy's who causes trouble by refusing to bow out of the picture; and Mark Kenneth Smaltz, a rival bootlegger masquerading as an agent of the "secret police"—you don't have to know why. The lavish, always appropriate settings were designed by

Kenneth Foy and lighted by Craig Miller; the beautiful, often humorous costumes are by Theoni V. Aldredge. A couple of numbers from the original score have been eliminated and replaced by a couple of more recent songs—"Slap That Bass" (welcome, Fred Astaire) and a beaut called "Ask Me Again," sung by Mr. Mitchell.

—EDITH OLIVER

Picturing Abundance

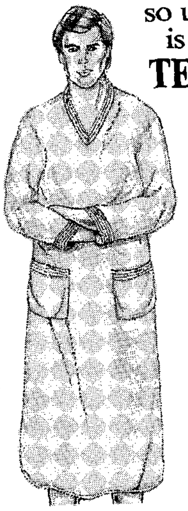
ANYONE in the market for a real treat should hotfoot it over to the Manhattan Theatre Club, where Lynne Meadow, the company's artistic director, is putting on Beth Henley's "Abundance." The production, which opened at the M.T.C.'s main stage on October 30th, stars Amanda Plummer and Tess Harper as two mail-order brides who arrive in the Wyoming Territory in the eighteen-sixties and become friends. The play puts paid, I think, to all discussions about the triviality of contemporary female playwrights and about whether it's possible to write an absorbing drama about women's relationships to each other and to their fate.

Henley begins with two ciphers waiting on a railway platform—Bess Johnson (Miss Plummer) and Macon Hill (Miss Harper). Both are waiting for husbands they have never seen. One of them, Bess, has come out West seduced by her prospective husband's letters about "the size of the sky," but she hopes for little more than domestic contentment ("I'm betting we're gonna be a match in Heaven, if only I ain't left stranded"). The other, Macon, "drunk with Western fever," has wild dreams and aspirations. On the domestic front, she thinks that, at best—if she and Bess are lucky—their husbands will "be cordial at Christmas." Two scenes later Bess's impoverished life with her husband (who, in an early reversal, turns out to be literally not the man who wrote to her) is such that when Christmas comes she doesn't even know it, and Macon's husband, for her present, is giving her his own glass eye.

Bess's husband is the sort of guy who doesn't work, because he prefers to "gamble for the high stakes," and before long Macon is trying to make up for the deficiencies of her friend's situation by sneaking her wood and clothing. In a passionate attempt to get Bess to run away with her—she wants them to head farther west—Macon spins a fantasy about how they'd survive, drinking "plentiful" before starting out, chewing on sticks, and dining on wild fruits that "grow all in abundance."

I think I wanted Henley's play to be a female buddy movie. I didn't want Bess to stand by her husband because she'd given her oath. I didn't want Macon to buy into society and end up betraying her friend. I wanted Amanda Plummer and Tess Harper to run away together and have adventures—the way Bette Midler and Shelley Long do in "Outrageous Fortune." But Beth Henley is a better playwright than I would be and wiser about the nature of genre. Women in female buddy pictures don't come in twos; they come in threes—"Three Broadway Girls," "Three Coins in the Fountain," "How to Marry a Millionaire," "Mystic Pizza," even "The Trojan Women." And these pictures aren't about antagonists forced by necessity or a common enemy to come to terms ("Outrageous Fortune" was self-conscious in its revisionism in this regard); they're about women who come to terms through being betrayed by men.

"Abundance" is structured around a number of felicitous pairings. It reunites director Ron Lagomarsino with designer Adrianne Lobel, who collaborated on the last female "buddy picture" the Manhattan Theatre Club produced—John Patrick Shanley's "Women of Manhattan." It also reunites Miss Plummer with Keith Reddin, who co-starred with her in the 1981 revival of "A Taste of Honey," the vehicle that catapulted Miss Plummer to fame. (Mr. Reddin, who is actually a colleague of Henley's—his program bio modestly suppresses the fact that he writes plays—has a gift for being self-effacing onstage; here, Henley has given him the role of the Inconsequential Interloper from Hell.) And there is the juxtaposition of Michael Rooker and Lanny Flaherty, radiating such different kinds of surly meanness as the two husbands. But what Henley hasn't done is to structure the play around the idea of two women whose strengths and weaknesses complement one another's. She might have given one brains and the other beauty, one aspiration and the other happiness in bed. She might have made one nice and the other not—like Bette Davis and Miriam Hopkins in "Old Ac-



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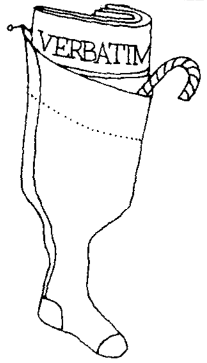

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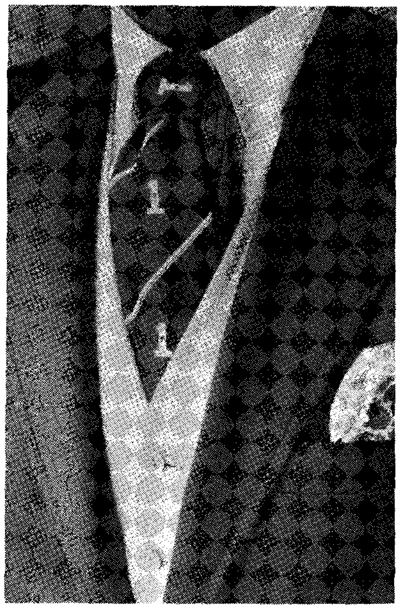

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quaintance"—but she didn't; Bess and Macon are both nice. Abandoning the clichés of the genre entirely, Henley gave Macon brains, beauty, ambition, and an ability to please men. To Bess she gave only a propensity for devotedness.

The point isn't so much what the two women are like: over the course of the twenty-five years the play spans, Bess and Macon prove to be many different women, and the moral perspective changes so often that the play begins to seem like "Three Women," that Robert Altman movie in which Sissy Spacek, Shelley Duvall, and Janice Rule keep turning into one another. The real contrast between Bess and Macon is less of attributes than of situations: One has nothing, the other has everything. One is the wallflower, the parlor-masochist; the other is the parlor-opportunist—which is how relations between women are usually pictured in two-handed stories. The interest in Henley's play is lodged primarily in the way it uses the figure of Woman to illustrate how the opportunist becomes enslaved. Its beauty lies in what happens to the title. We begin by thinking that "abundance" is plenty—having enough of what you want or need. We discover—with the help of a haunting set, whose slow-moving turntables sometimes stop at an angle that leaves an overly optimistic glimpse of the future in a patch of Western sky—that for Woman (and, by extension, anyone) "abundance" is the possibility of romance. In the end, the woman who has nothing gets her revenge by appropriating the other woman's dreams.

I liked best about "Abundance" the fact that it forces Amanda Plummer to transcend the limitations of the style of acting she has always trafficked in: that self-conscious, self-serving version of suffering and idiosyncrasy she has been projecting ever since "A Taste of Honey." Henley's play gives Plummer a chance to do her own thing with a vengeance—there's a scene where she goes ape in chains—but it also presents her with a script so strong and a co-star so compelling that, for once, she has to play a part as written. Plummer *has* to react to Harper's Macon: she has to project a moral viewpoint, something I've never before seen her do. I love the idea that it took two other women to set Amanda Plummer free. Maybe "Abundance" is a "buddy picture" after all.

—MIMI KRAMER

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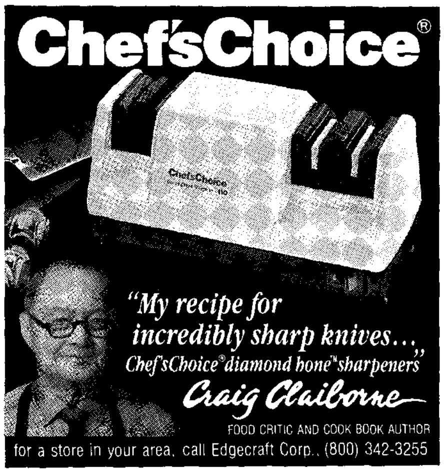
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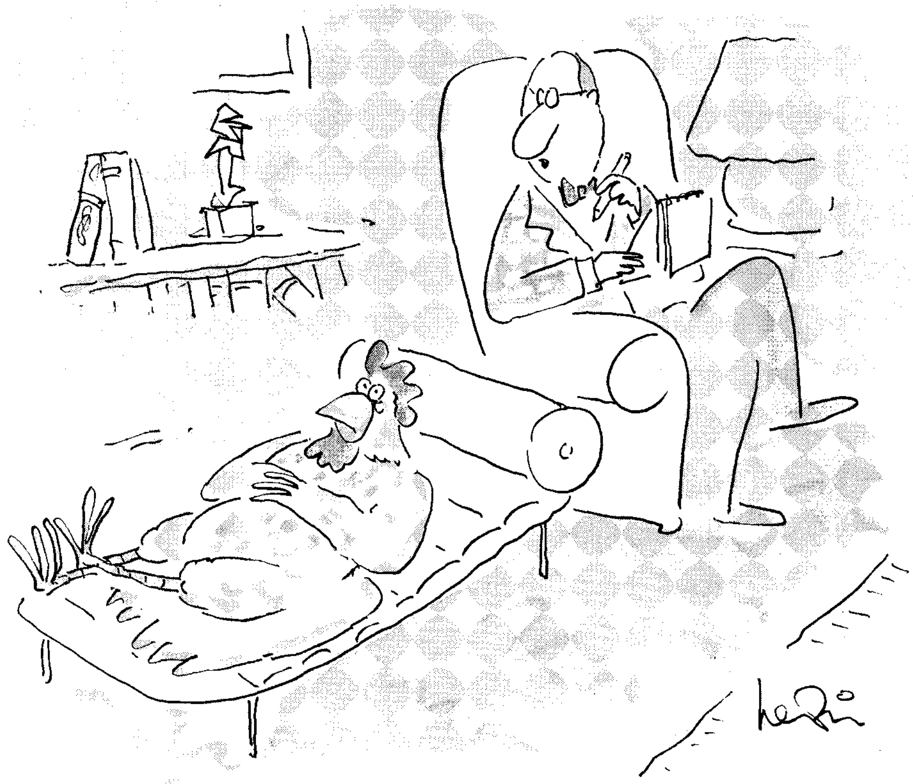
MUSICAL EVENTS

Bacchanal

TWO big events billed for Carnegie's centenary season were the New York premières of "La Vera Storia," Italo Calvino and Luciano Berio's modern "Trovatore," and of "The Bassarids," W. H. Auden, Chester Kallman, and Hans Werner Henze's modern "Bacchae." The Berio fell through, but "The Bassarids" arrived, brought by Christoph von Dohnányi and the Cleveland Orchestra, and it was a great success. The work—a one-act, four-movement opera-symphony, lasting two and a half hours—had its first performance at the 1966 Salzburg Festival, when it was also conducted by Mr. Dohnányi. (That performance was in German; Santa Fe gave the original-language première two years later.) The Salzburg première was a triumph. Like my colleague Peter Heyworth, I "came away elated from that preposterous Festspielhaus, whose megalomaniac stage and cinema-deluxe auditorium so precisely mirror the spirit of Karajan's Salzburg: perhaps, after all, opera was not so dead as Salzburg's audiences and productions made it seem." But Henze has related that afterward he wandered the streets of Salzburg alone, in despair, stricken by a fatuous, fashionable audience's incomprehension of all he had striven for. (Verdi felt much the same when "Don Carlos," his noblest achievement, was received with a babble of Parisian chatter.) Henze's next big première, in 1968, was the Second Piano Concerto. A parergon to "The Bassarids," it inaugurated a Kunsthalle named for Richard Kaselowsky, an early member of the Nazi Party. On the eve of the performance, the composer published a manifesto, "Mein Standpunkt," which ended, "Unnecessary are new museums, opera houses, and world premières. Necessary, to set about making dreams come true. Necessary, to abolish the dominion of men over men. . . . Necessary, the creation of mankind's greatest work of art: the World Revolution." It was ten years after "The Bassarids" before he found a way back to grand opera, with "We Come to the River," which has an unflinchingly socialist text by Edward Bond. "We Come to the River" was produced by Covent Garden in 1976 and at Santa Fe eight years later.

The withdrawal from grand opera was not unpredictable. Back in 1953, Germany's young wonder-composer had fled the "music market" to spend the next three years confiding his Italian musings, discoveries, and dreams to the very long score of "König Hirsch." Then in "Der Prinz von Homburg" (1960) a romantic dreamer confronted Prussian militarism. In "Elegy for Young Lovers" (1961), links between art and life, and a creator's possibly conflicting responsibilities, to his art and to his fellows, were explored. The seed of "The Bassarids" was planted in 1961. While it grew, there was first "Der Junge Lord" (1965), a comic "Bacchae": the protagonist, although no god but only a trained monkey, unleashes Dionysian worship, unreason, and frenzy. A boyhood memory of Henze's has bearing on "The Bassarids" and on much else he has written. During a neighbor's jolly wedding party, the bride told him that her Jürgen could not sleep at night but kept starting up: "You see, he works in a concentration camp, it's called Dachau, he's on a tower. And there are all these spotlights, and every night these Jewish people and communists and homosexuals imprisoned there come out of the huts and run to the electric wire that fences the camp, to commit suicide." And while she spoke of this the boy "heard my father and his pals roaring out Nazi songs as they staggered drunkenly through the woods."

Henze has called "The Bassarids," his ninth opera, "a summing up of everything I'd achieved until then, and one of the strongest manifestations of my musical language . . . in my way of treating an orchestra, my way of treating voices, of building up forms, my colors, and all these things." The Carnegie performance revealed a great span of copious yet disciplined, beautiful, exciting music. A tension between the music and the text proved fruitful. The poets considered Nazism a Dionysian manifestation. Euripides' Dionysus, they wrote in an introduction to the opera, is "a heartless monster, before whom we rightly tremble, but whom it is impossible to admire." He destroys calmness and reason; he can make men and women feel like gods while they act like beasts. For the composer, Nazism, far from being mass



"Why do you think you cross the road?"

hysteria, had "precise social and economic roots." Pentheus, intent on imposing conformity, is Henze's villain, and Dionysus is a savior:

> The basic conflict in "The Bassarids" is between social repression and sexual liberation: the liberation of the individual. It shows people as individuals breaking out of a social context, as a road to freedom, as the intoxicating liberation of people who suddenly discover themselves, who release the Dionysus within themselves.

Henze said that in 1975, before a Frankfurt production; Auden would have been distressed. Where composer and poets agree is that Pentheus' attempt to repress his instinctual nature leads to his destruction. "The Bassarids" is not schematic, and is not an explanation or (despite such lines as the chorus's "We heard nothing. We saw nothing. We took no part in her lawless frenzy") a merely topical application of "The Bacchae" but a version of that psychologically and socially penetrating tragedy fashioned for musical enactment. The long line of the symphony shows Pentheus' music in conflict with and finally overcome by the music of Dionysus.

Kenneth Riegel, the Carnegie Dionysus, took a critical, Audenesque view of the god. He was very sure, but he sang the glittering, seductive music in tight, unattractive tones and in an oddly chirpy, charmless manner. (In Salzburg, Loren Driscoll was a more persuasive seducer.) Vernon Hartman made a sound, sturdy Pentheus. Anja Silja's Agave reached tragic heights. Celina Lindsley (Autonoe), Ortrun Wenkel (Beroe), Michael Burt (Cadmus), Monte Pederson (Captain of the Guard), and Jon Garrison (Tiresias) were all good. The Cleveland Orchestra Chorus was satisfactory; the orchestra was superb. Mr. Dohnányi led an inspired performance. The rococo comic intermezzo—Pentheus' fevered fantasy of his mother and his aunt vying, amid giggles, for the favors of a handsome guardsman—was omitted, at the composer's suggestion, and that brought the duration to under two hours. In 1966, I felt that the intermezzo was perhaps a shade too long, but this time I missed it.

THE Met's new "Ballo in Maschera"—the first new production of the season—is a disgusting exhibition. Although the perpetuation of grand opera, the most expensive but potentially the most potent of all art forms, may be socially hard to justify even at the best of times, strong arguments for its continued existence can be made. This "Ballo," however, is an obscenity—ostentatiously costly, to anti-artistic effect. An opera about the responsibilities attached to high public office, conflicts between personal inclination and public duty, the smart of betrayal by those most trusted, and the vanity of donning masks to evade reality (in each act, disguised personages are unmasked) has been reduced to a circus.

The kindest judgment on Piero Faggioni, who was engaged to direct, design, and light the show, would be to assume that he meant to mock and satirize the opera in question, the whole idea of opera, the Met, and a Met audience uncaring about music and easily pleased. If this was his intention, it was furthered by various jokes: a mountainous Riccardo waddled on during his animated entrance music; Oscar's headgear kept falling off; Amelia entered Ulrica's den to emote shadowed beneath an enormous Gainsborough hat; Renato cried "Siam soli" to a Sam and Tom accompanied by a posse of retainers; Riccardo sang his intimate last-act monologue to the ears of eight flunkies; Oscar delivered his invitation to the ball and his second aria surrounded by capering attendants. The scenes were elaborately stepped, and the audience was invited to wonder whether Luciano Pavarotti, while the rest of the cast ranged freely, would ever quit the flat central landing along which he had entered. (Once or twice he did venture a single step.) The prelude became the accompaniment to a commedia-dell'arte ballet, with Pierrots and conspiratorial Pantaloons mopping and mowing. During the final duet, another such ballet was prominently enacted on a bridge above Amelia and Riccardo: a Pantaloon stabbed a Pierrot in Columbine's embrace while below them—almost unnoticed—Renato assassinated Riccardo. In the closing tableaux, Riccardo bestowed a dying kiss upon Oscar where Verdi calls for a poignant visual trio of Riccardo, Amelia, and Renato: the ruler who has heeded duty's call too late; a woman who, like Elizabeth in "Don Carlos," strives to live purely and honestly though her heart is rent; and a good man impetuously prompted into a criminal act.

For this brief final scene, the masked

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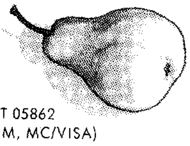

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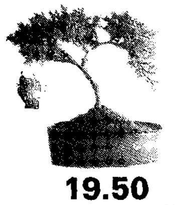

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ball, Mr. Faggioni opened the Met stage to its full depth, tiered it, and thronged it with hundreds of choristers, dancers, and supers, and with dancing topiary, in what looked like an attempt to out-Zeffirelli Zeffirelli. At the same time, he underlit the extravaganza, and he had designed scenery so vulgar and drab that it suggested the lobby of a once pretentious hotel. If his aim was to make fun of "Ballo," he missed the mark with the first-night audience. The show was acclaimed.

The unfortunate singers, unable to be dramatic, gave largely self-serving performances. Mr. Pavarotti began the love duet, which is marked at the start *con mezza voce* and *pianissimo*, in stentorian tones suggesting a trial run for his forthcoming Otello; he paid small attention to his Amelia. As Amelia, Aprile Millo produced a passable imitation of a Verdi diva, except in some unsmooth ignoring of long slurs. Harolyn Blackwell, the Oscar, shone out, full-toned, in the first-act finale; and in the second-act finale Juan Pons, the Renato, was dramatically trenchant. On paper the cast—with the exception of the Ulrica, Elena Obraztsova, whose voice was in tatters—was not unpromising. Mr. Pavarotti may be no actor, but he retains some vocal virtues; by Elijah Moshinsky in the previous Met production and by Zeffirelli at La Scala he was induced to give a reasonably animated performance of the leading role. In the pit, the artistic director of the company, James Levine, presided over the deplorable manifestation.

THERE was opera more serious at Opera Omaha's fall festival: three performances of John Casken's "Golem," four of Donizetti's "Maria Padilla," and four of Angelina Réaux's one-woman Weill show, "Stranger Here Myself." Opera Omaha justifiedly blazoned "Alive!" across its program book.

"Golem," Casken's first opera, appeared at the Almeida Festival, in London, last year, and has won the first Britten Award for Composition; a Virgin recording is due. This is a drama about inanimate matter made animate, an act of creation and its consequences, father-son and master-servant relationships, and a well-intentioned but doomed attempt to produce an "artificial" (Casken's word) savior. With the golem tale—of the sixteenth-century

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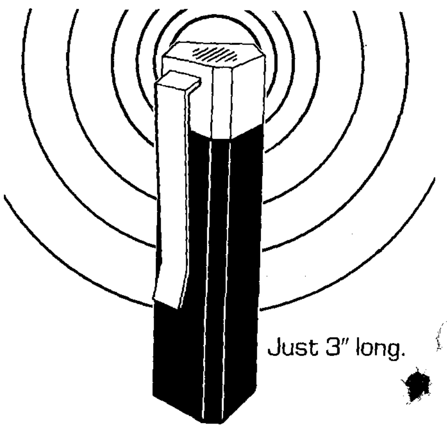
Prague rabbi who breathed life into a huge figure he had fashioned from clay—are mingled strands from related myths: Genesis, Prometheus, Faust, Frankenstein, "The Ring." It is an interesting and powerful work, precisely and imaginatively composed, for eight singers and ten players. Both the music and the libretto, the composer's own, are pared and pungent. They strike deep.

In Omaha, there were strong performances from Terry Hodges (the rabbi), Gordon Holleman (the golem), Jayne West (Miriam, the rabbi's wife, the feminine element that completes and disturbs the music of several scenes), and Douglas Stevens (Ometh, a Prometheus figure, compound of fire and air, who inspires the from-clay-created golem beyond the rabbi's intentions); and also from Thomas Bogdan, Martha Kasten, Eric McCluskey, and Carl Saloga, in smaller roles and as a quartet-chorus. Richard Pittman conducted an adept ensemble from the Omaha Symphony. Keith Warner's staging, in décor by John Pascoe, was inventive. The place of performance, the columned marble auditorium of Omaha's Joslyn Memorial—a magnificent Deco-cum-Moderne monument raised by an Artemisia of our century—was not happy. Sound from the stage of this temple, it seems, does not project, and so Opera Omaha builds another stage out into the house, reducing the capacity to about seven hundred and fifty. So far so good: singers and listeners are all in one room, eighteenth-century fashion, and the singers tell strongly. But the orchestra is placed behind them, on that stage from which sounds do not carry, and Casken's opera lives as much in its instrumental as in its vocal lines. I knew the piece from a tape of the Almeida show; in Omaha one had to "rebalance," to amplify in mind's ear the fine-grained, sensitive playing that accompanied the singers.

"Maria Padilla" is a work of those last active years in which Donizetti poured out operas filled with human feeling and generous, extraordinary musical invention. The romantic hero, Don Pedro, is the baritone; the tenor, Maria's father, sings a poignant mad scene. Despite some pages of descent into conventional cabaletta, it is a moving and beautiful opera. The Omaha production, directed and designed (with flowing costumes mainly white



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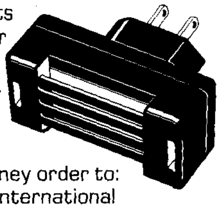

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or black) by Mr. Pascoe, was not stylish. "Give the singers something to do" was his maxim, and that something was either dressing and undressing or embracing, pawing, snogging *coram populo*. The singers could watch their conductor, John DeMain, on television screens, but he, "backstage," could not watch them. Donizetti left two endings: in one, Maria, raised to a pinnacle of ecstasy, expires of joy, amid spoken comment by her husband and her father; in the other, she survives in triumph. Omaha used the music of the happy ending, but at the close Maria was stabbed by a scheming duke, and her rival (a mute role), dressed in brilliant emerald, dominated the final tableau. The heroine was Renee Fleming, a pleasing soprano, who phrased with feeling and commanded recitative. Above the staff, there were some loud, squealy notes; she must beware of sacrificing lightness and freshness to volume. Motti Kastón was a beefy, assured Pedro. Stella Zambalis and Hans Gregory Ashbaker were Maria's sister and father.

"Stranger Here Myself" is an anthology of songs from Weill theatre pieces sung by a woman on the verge of suicide who has checked into a hotel room. I prefer to hear Weill songs in the dramatic context for which they were written, and with the original accompaniment (here piano, percussion, and occasionally an accordion provide support), but the sequence is cunningly assembled, and Miss Réaux transforms the synthetic character (Jenny, Anna of the "Deadly Sins," Marie Galante, Rose from "Street Scene," and many others go into her making) into an archetype of desperate woman. She sings from the heart, fearlessly, frankly, with art but without artifice, and the show is affecting.

—ANDREW PORTER

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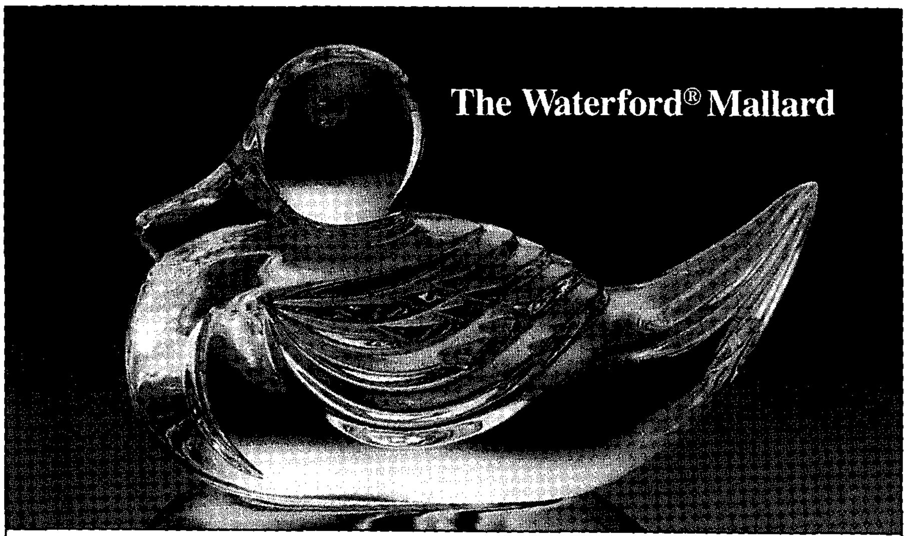

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

NOVEMBER 1

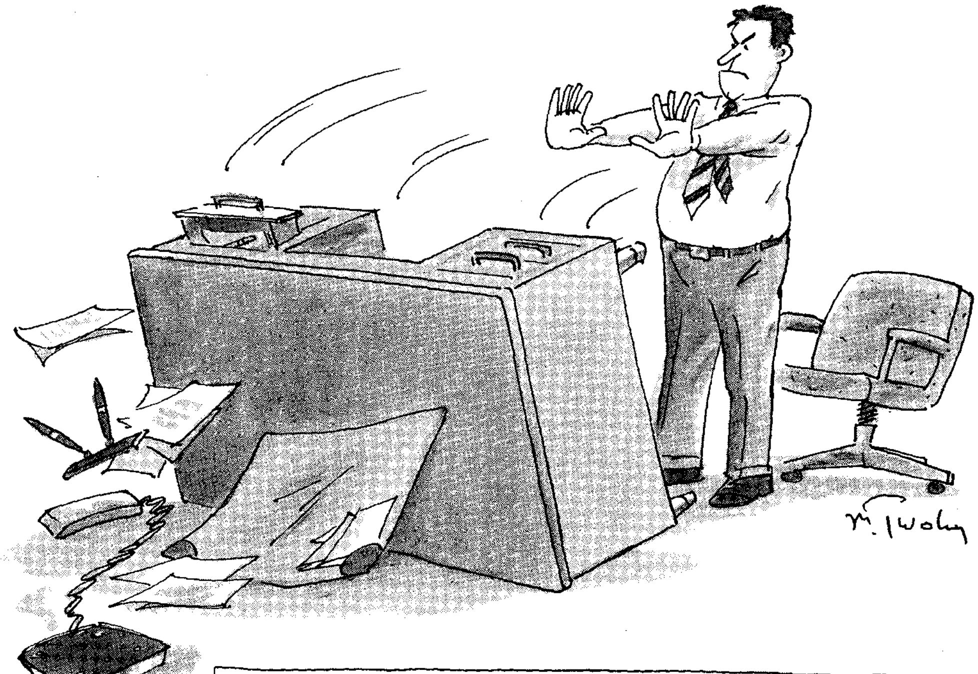
THE wreckage that surrounded the eventual reaching of a budget agreement will take some time to clear away, and some of it may be unclearable. Although a deal was reached last weekend by punch-drunk, exhausted politicians who were thinking about a lot of things besides policy, there remains an enormous budget deficit. Meanwhile, there has been tremendous damage to the President, to his party, to our political system, and to the country. Still, given everything, the outcome is better than might have been expected. It does raise taxes in a relatively, if indirectly, fair way, and puts restraints on spending. It probably went as far as the current state of our politics would allow, which says a lot about the current state of our politics; but it does not, contrary to a view much in fashion now, suggest that our very system of government cannot work.

For all the difficulties of reaching hard decisions in a system of divided government—difficulties that the framers of the Constitution had good reason to erect—the whole thing need not have happened the way it did. Much of the damage was self-inflicted. The President's calamitous performance has left him with deep wounds, even though his popularity may go back up and even if he ends up with what is generally deemed a success in the Persian Gulf. At the moment, there are deepening worries in Washington that he intends to fight to liberate Kuwait, as he and his advisers add to the list of outrages or possible provocations by Saddam Hussein; yet he doesn't now have bipartisan—or, probably, popular—support for doing so. It is obvious that by emphasizing Iraq this week the President has been at least in part engaged in an exercise in changing the subject.

In the budget battle, Bush squandered his popularity to no good purpose, rather than use it, earlier, in a serious attempt to solve our gravest domestic problem; he demonstrated that, as many people feared, he is not only disinclined to lead but may not know how to; he eroded the authority and dignity that a President needs. He did not, and does not now, come across as a serious man. His recent shrill campaigning against the Democrats—saying that the increases in taxes are all their fault—may or may not help him for this election, but it won't help his deeper, longer-term problems. (Enough of his advisers thought it was a loser—that whenever he mentioned the budget it was a loser—that today he toned down and simply talked about the need for more Republicans in Congress, and about Iraq.) Bush's saying "the Democrats made me do it" doesn't convey strong leadership. For their part, the Democrats, once liberated from any serious bipartisan effort, played the politics of the situation for all they could, and won at least a short-term political victory—with the help of an inept White House. On both sides, people adopted tactical positions that became absolute imperatives, got caught up in defending positions for the sake of it, and stopped only because both sides heard a final bell from the public.

In the end, this was as serious a deficit reduction as has ever been enacted. The saving was said to amount to $40 billion in the first year and $492 billion, or $496 billion, or whatever (instead of the long-intended $500 billion) over five years; the estimates, based on some highly optimistic economic assumptions and on actions that may or may not occur, shouldn't be taken too seriously. But there is also reason to argue that the spectators—the press and the public (that part of the public which was interested)—got more worked up, seeing each hitch as a national crisis, than the situation warranted. At some point, somehow, there was always going to be a deal. The way it was arrived at was messy and prolonged, but, given what the politicians were being asked to do—without any real public support for hard measures—and the role played by a White House that was indecisive, excessively combative, and didn't know when to quit, the fact that it took a long time and was less than smooth shouldn't have been surprising. Actually, the final budget plan was a substantial improvement over the one rejected earlier by the House. Nevertheless, the country saw what it found to be a dismaying spectacle, and, though its anger was probably exaggerated—and, in the process, exacerbated—by the media (if the fashion is to say that the public is angry, why do a story about people who aren't angry?), there can be no question about the effect on the body politic, which depends for its health on a certain amount of consensus, civility, and respect.

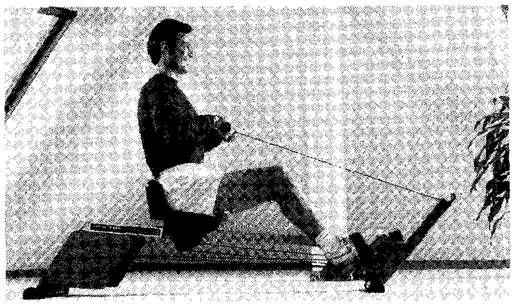
We will never know whether serious Presidential involvement and leadership, at a much earlier stage, could have led to a more rational process and result, but a lot of people here think it could have. Though many of the problems had to do with the state of our politics today—the



THE TERRIBLE FORTY-TWOS

determination of the interest groups, and the politicians' fear of the voters and need for special-interest money—Bush, with his "read my lips" approach to our largest domestic issue (a pledge he had always known he would have to break), his unwillingness to lead, made a major contribution to that state of our politics. Collectively, members of Congress are not going to be braver than a President, especially one with a demonstrated willingness to go on the attack. Of course, the long-term political damage to Bush cannot be judged absent the knowledge of how his opposition behaves in the future. The President engaged in a series of misguided tactics that only succeeded in dragging out the process and making it more partisan and ragged, and, though his advisers are much to blame, he took their advice. With good reason, there is growing talk among Bush's friends about the need for a White House shakeup, to get some wiser heads around the President. The idea is to bring in people more experienced and sensible than the bumptious John Sununu, the chief of staff, who is seen as having hurt the President on more than just the budget fight; if Sununu, who has resisted having any peers around—any rivals for power—and has gathered a weak staff, resists again, he might have to go. But people are very careful in talking about this to the President, who is loath to admit mistakes in judgment.

At least for now, Bush has lost the one thing any President needs in order to be effective: the ability to make members of either party fear him. The nadir came, of course, during the week in early October, shortly after the House of Representatives rejected the first budget agreement, when Bush appeared to agree with each delegation of Republicans who came to see him to demand different tax policies. (The Senate Republicans wanted him to drop the pursuit of a capital gains tax cut and take a corresponding increase in tax rates off the table, where he had just placed it at a press conference that morning; the House Republicans wanted him to pursue a small rate increase in exchange for a generous capital gains cut.) It was explained later by the White House, and by the President's friends in Congress, that the spokesman for each delegation, in saying on the White House driveway that the President agreed with its position,



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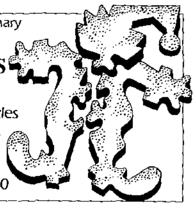

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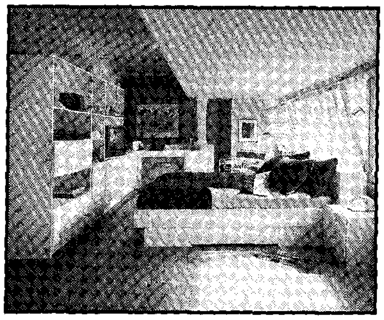

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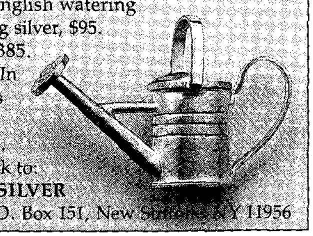

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overinterpreted the President's polite comments—but he clearly gave them reason to. There was actually a tiny bit of strategy, however misbegotten, behind the President's performance: he was, as he so much likes to do, keeping his options open. But in so doing he underscored a great many people's misgivings about him as a man too intent on pleasing all factions of his party (that's how he got to be President), and of no fixed beliefs. He did keep his options open, but he ended up looking feckless. Many Republicans in Congress and some of the President's own advisers were dismayed. Some advisers thought he should be clearer about where he stood; others felt that that would reduce his negotiating room. The President's own instincts drew him to the latter advice. Robert Dole, the Senate Minority Leader, was among those who felt that the President should offer clearer leadership, and he tried to send that message to the White House. In the course of these events, another Republican senator said to me, "All of our party want to rally around the President, to support him, but, very frankly, we don't know where he is." Much of the Republicans' anger directed at Sununu and at Richard Darman, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, was a translation of their frustration with the President. Bush's flip "Read my hips" while jogging later that week compounded the damage. Most Americans don't want to see their President act that way.

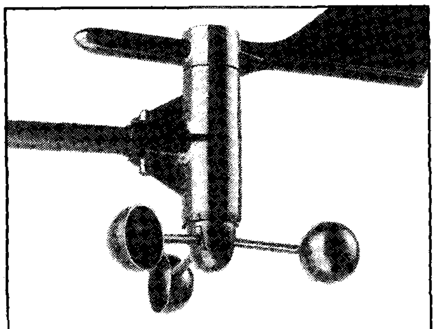
Bush's identity problem reflected and reinforced that of his party. The House Republicans' rebellion against the first budget deal was a playing out of a schism that had been developing for some time, and has become increasingly bitter—to the point where the Party now appears to be having a collective nervous breakdown. (Bush will have to find unifying issues for next year.) Republicans are going into the midterm election floundering and divided—with more of them angry with Bush than are saying so out loud. Some are angry that he removed the tax issue; others—this is more serious—that in providing such vacillating leadership he both compounded the Party's problems and became an embarrassment. The revolt of Newt Gingrich, the House Minority Whip, against the first budget deal wasn't so much a traitorous act by a Party leader (as the White House saw it) as an enactment of the schism within the Party, with Gingrich getting in front of his followers. There is a substantial school of thought that the majority of the House Republicans would have voted against the deal no matter what Gingrich did. A close Republican observer said to me, "Newt reflects the majority of his caucus." Gingrich is a rebel who likes to get attention, but he also has a coherent set of thoughts about where the future of the Republican Party lies. These thoughts have to do with both substance and tactics, and a large majority of House Republicans agree with him on the substance, if not always on tactics. Further, there is a growing body of Senate Republicans who are of a similar school of thought. Many of these senators had served in the House, and came to the Senate teethed on the frustrations of having been in the minority and powerless for so long. (Republicans haven't dominated the House since 1954.)

The House Republicans' frustration has been building over the years, and Gingrich is only going further than some of his predecessors in both exploiting it and trying to build a new Republican base. This group of House and Senate members represents the generational and demographic changes within the Republican Party—the old, Eastern wing is desiccated and about dead, while the Party grows stronger, with a new type of Republican, in the South and Southwest. Bush, who is both Connecticut and Texas, tries to reflect them both. A close Republican observer says that one of Bush's problems is that he is surrounded in the White House by Easterners—Sununu, and Darman and other staff members from what Bush, attacking Dukakis, once called the "Harvard Yard boutique"—who don't understand this new group and "think of them as clods, as representing the lower classes." The new Republicans aren't the same as the old Western conservatives, though there are some of them around and to some extent the two groups overlap. The new conservatives are more activist, "pro-growth," and, like the old conservatives, against government spending. But now that there are more programs to protect Republicans in general are more hypocritical about spending. Republicans want to cut spending, but they don't want to cut programs.

When the House brought up a new deficit plan on October 16th, the House Republicans had drawn up a proposal that raised no taxes but also made no specific spending cuts—it froze them at current levels for three years, which would cause unspecified reductions after inflation—and, even with some stretching, it couldn't meet the agreed budget-reduction target. To the Republicans' fury, the Democrats wouldn't let that proposal be put to a vote, because it would have forced Democrats to vote against a proposal that appeared to cut spending without raising taxes. A House Democratic leadership aide said to me, "We couldn't hang our people out to dry."

The conservative rebels dismiss as good-government mush, as lacking in muscularity, any concern about how to have enough taxes to pay for what they actually want (they hide behind the worn façade of "growth" through tax cuts), which enables them to take a clean anti-tax position. This also puts them in a direct line of confrontation with some of their congressional leaders, as well as with the President. To them, certain leading Republican congressional figures, such as Dole, Senator Pete Dominici (former chairman of the Senate Budget Committee), and House Minority Leader Bob Michel, who act "responsibly"—who say, for instance, that taxes have to go up to reduce the debt—are passé. The issue isn't so much one of policy as of how to make the Republican Party the majority congressional party. Unlike most of their leaders, the conservative activists believe in confrontation rather than in accommodation. The senators have formed an informal group—a guerrilla band of about ten, who can stir up other Republicans—that they secretly call the 214 Club, for the room in the Capitol where they often meet.

Gingrich, however, has a further agenda: to bring such dishonor on the Democratic Party, by painting it as corrupt, unpatriotic, and having been collectively at Chappaquiddick (there's little Gingrich won't use in an argument), and by trying to show Congress as unable to function, that the Republicans can before long take over the House. And, of course, Gingrich could be Speaker. (Michel is expected to retire before long.) But Gingrich was elected Whip last year by only a two-vote margin and with moderate sup-



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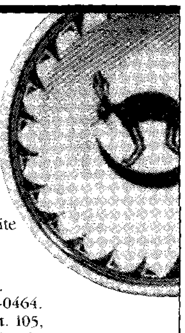

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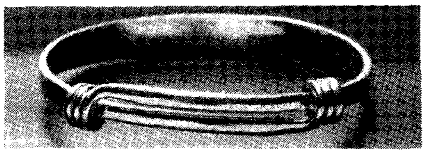

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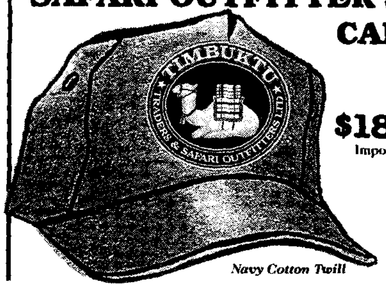
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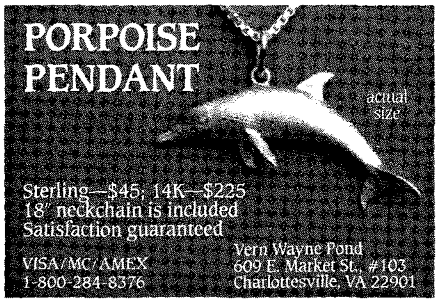
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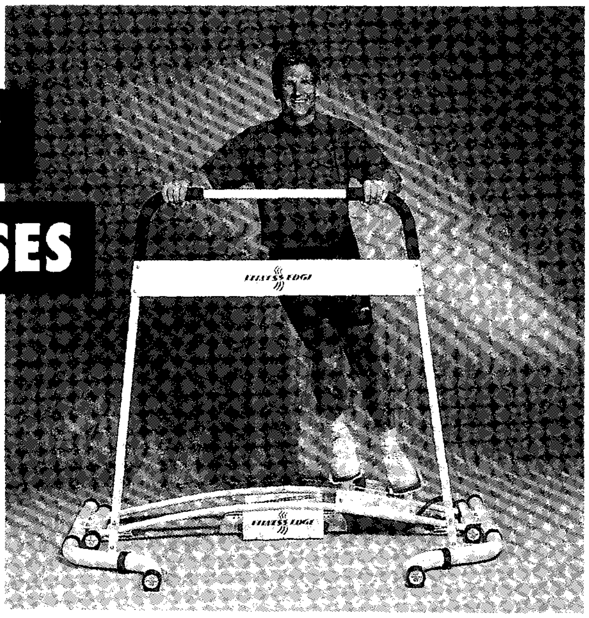
port, and he now has new enemies (and not just among moderates) and rivals for any future leadership position. Yet, whatever his role, he and what he represents are a growing force within the Republican Party. The rejection of the budget deal by a majority of the House Republicans, even after a televised appeal by the President, bespoke a cold-blooded calculation, reinforced by anger, that the President had looked after his 1992 reëlection interests by breaking his no-tax pledge in order to get a deal that might help the economy by then, and removed their most potent issue for this year (Republicans don't have a lot of issues just now), so they would look after their own interests. (The conservative activists in the Senate felt the same way, though almost none of them are up for reëlection this year.) The split among Republicans has continued—virtually up to the elections—to the point where the President has been publicly humiliated by Republican candidates' not even showing up at events at which he appeared for them, or blatantly separating themselves from him in his presence; and several quietly let it be known they would just as soon he not turn up for them at all. The now famous memo by Edward Rollins, the head of the campaign committee for the House Republicans, telling them not to hesitate to oppose the President on taxes simply reflected what was already going on; Rollins' error was in writing it down. Such insouciance on the part of Republican politicians toward a President who was not long ago soaring in the polls—he's been dropping quickly, even after one discounts for the burst he enjoyed when he first dispatched troops to the Persian Gulf—will have long-term consequences.

FOLLOWING the defeat of the first budget deal, the divisions among the House Republicans were so severe (some described a caucus meeting over the Columbus Day weekend, when the government was shut down, as "Beirut") that they were effectively out of the budget game from then on. They couldn't even send a representative to meetings that weekend to work out a bipartisan deal to get to the next stage. This left the field to the House Democrats, who, for the first time in a long time, found happiness. With the help of Bush, who hung on to the quest for a capital gains tax cut far too long, the Democrats had already made headway in their effort to portray the President, and his party, as protecting the rich. Under the leadership of House Majority Leader Dick Gephardt, they had tried to do this last year in the course of a fight over capital gains, and it was widely said then that there was nothing to be gained from a "class warfare" issue. Gephardt, along with House Speaker Thomas Foley and Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, crafted this year's strategy—with House liberals giving their leaders a strong push. The Democrats needed the "Bush is for the rich" issue this year for their own self-protection. They needed cover for the fact that the first budget deal and any subsequent one would contain taxes on the middle class, through excise taxes. Also, worried about signs of a growing anti-incumbency feeling in the country, they deliberately designed the "Bush favors the rich" strategy in the hope that it would dilute, if not divert, that feeling. With Bush's help, they managed, at least for a while, to change the issue from whether there should be taxes to who should be taxed.

The failure of the first deal and the clear field left by the House Republicans also gave the House Democratic leadership, which had been under strong criticism from a number of liberals for engaging in summitry with the Administration and then bringing back an "unfair" deal—weary and under the pressure of time, the Democratic leaders had agreed to some questionable proposals—an opportunity to square themselves with their members by backing a strongly liberal proposal and giving their more restive members a chance to help write it. But this new Democratic proposal led to problems later on. It met a lot of the House Democrats' objections to the first proposal, by reducing the amount by which Medicare would be cut (and raising the salary level against which Medicare taxes would be charged), by eliminating the two-week delay in unemployment-compensation payments, by dropping the ill-conceived "growth incentives" that constituted new tax breaks, and by raising the top marginal tax rate to thirty-three per cent for all those over a certain income level—thus getting rid of the famous "bubble." To this they added a surtax on incomes of over a million dollars, which gave them small revenue and a big symbol. In order to get enough votes to pass the new proposal, an increase in the gasoline tax was dropped. In order to raise enough revenue to make up for the elimination of the gas tax, the indexing of tax rates was delayed for a year—a provision the Administration subsequently attacked as yet another tax increase on the middle class. A House Democratic aide told me that the delay in indexing was seen as the less politically poisonous of the two. In order to win the support of enough moderate Democrats—and Democrats from timber states—a modified capital gains provision was added. The proposal passed the House on October 16th with only ten Republicans voting for it, and the action moved to the Senate, which presented a new and more complex political situation.

BY this time, the bubble had become a highly political as well as theological issue. The bubble is the phenomenon by which under the current tax laws people pay a marginal tax rate of twenty-eight per cent for a certain range of income, a marginal rate of thirty-three per cent for the next range of income (from about $78,000 to about $185,000 for a married couple filing a joint return), and twenty-eight per cent on income above that. There was a perfectly sensible policy reason for establishing the bubble, but the shape of it gave the tax code a funny look, and the reason takes too long for politicians on the defensive to explain. The bubble got in the tax code because key participants in the writing of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 insisted that there be no more than two tax rates (the first was fifteen per cent) and that the second one be no higher than twenty-eight per cent, in part because, since the capital gains differential was being eliminated in the name of simplifying the code, gains would be taxed as ordinary income. But more revenue was needed to make the reform "revenue neutral"—that is, neither gain nor lose revenue—so in effect a surtax of five per cent, leading to a new marginal rate of thirty-three per cent, was added as upper-middle-income people had their personal exemptions, and some of the benefits of the fifteen-per-cent tax, phased out. After the phase-out, the rate returned to twenty-eight per cent. In the end, no taxpayers were to pay at a higher *average* rate than twenty-eight per cent. Supporters of the 1986 reform—including Senator Bill Bradley, Democrat of New Jersey—argue that the bubble made the tax-reform law more progressive than it would have been had there been solely the two rates, but the bubble became a tempting target for many Democrats, who argued that the richest taxpayers were paying at a lower rate than those just below them. Some of this was disingenuous, but the bubble provided a convenient, seemingly justifiable way to argue for an increase in tax rates. Bradley points out, to no avail, that this isn't the only bubble in the tax code—that one involving the phase-out of benefits to poor people gets no political attention. (Aides to possible rivals to Bradley, should he run for the Presidency, are not reluctant to suggest that the issue of the bubble could cause him problems in a contest for the Democratic nomination.) The bubble, then, became the symbol for the "fairness" argument. Dole commented recently that the bubble might be the first piece of the tax code that was eliminated



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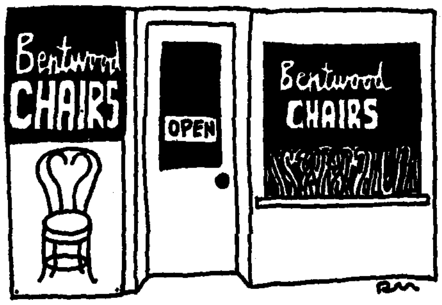
because no one understood it. So, in the course of the long negotiations, while the Democrats held out for a thirty-three-per-cent rate on all upper-level income—or "eliminating the bubble"—perhaps in exchange for some cut in the capital gains tax, and the Administration insisted it wouldn't accept any increase in tax rates (this was the President's fallback position when he said he would accept new taxes) and continued to demand a cut in capital gains taxes, the Administration, to the dismay of numerous Republicans, took a beating on the issue of "protecting the rich."

WHILE all attention had been on the House—because the House rejected the first budget deal, the Senate never had to vote on it—the Senate was even less promising territory for a budget deal. The Democrats control the Senate by a narrower margin—fifty-five to forty-five—than they do the House, and some of the Democrats are conservative and won't vote with the leadership on various issues. Further, when it came to a pain-inflicting budget agreement, most of the Democratic candidates up for reëlection this year weren't available. An additional problem for the Democratic Senate leaders was that, because of filibuster rules, sixty, not fifty-one, votes could be needed to get the budget through the Senate. It was for all of these reasons that the Senate never passed a serious budget this year. (Some Republicans think Bush shouldn't have let the Senate off the hook by convening a summit.) And, despite the Senate leaders' assurances, there is a real question whether the first budget deal would have passed there. The only way to get a new budget deal through the Senate was for its bipartisan leaders to agree to one that could also win enough Republican support, and exercise as much discipline as possible. Because of this, and because the Senate Finance Committee is so closely divided politically and ideologically (and Bradley and Max Baucus, Democrat of Montana, both of whom are up for reëlection, weren't available), the bill that went to the Senate floor was more conservative than the House-passed measure, and, in exchange for Dole's (and the Administration's) support, Mitchell and Finance Committee Chairman Lloyd Bentsen, of Texas, were sworn to defend it. Bradley later gave various reasons for opposing the Finance Committee bill—including the fact that it raised taxes on the middle class through excise taxes, and it contained tax breaks for certain industries—but his opposition caused some annoyance in the Senate Democratic caucus; some Senate observers felt that Bradley, who is deemed to be in no real reëlection danger, wanted, in the midst of a tax revolt in New Jersey, to try to keep his reëlection margin as high as it had been before. (Virtually all the members of Congress from New Jersey opposed the budget deal.)

The Senate proposal left alone the subjects of rates and capital gains, thus maintaining the existing policy, but did contain some breaks for certain industries, including oil and gas (dear to Bentsen as well as other senators from the South and Southwest), and it contained less of an increase in the gasoline tax and also less of a cut in Medicare than the original budget deal had. (The House Democratic budget cut Medicare still less.) Keeping the Senate package together took some doing, as Democrats, some of them up for reëlection, offered amendments that were very tempting to most Democrats—and some Republicans. (Mitchell and Bentsen and allies had tried to dissuade their colleagues from offering such amendments.) Had any serious amendment passed, the whole deal could have come unravelled, and the Senate, now under the pressure of time, could have contributed its own embarrassing debacle. One amendment that came very close to getting a majority, for example, and was defeated only because some senators were willing to be brave, would have imposed the surtax on million-dollar incomes and used the money so that premiums of Medicare beneficiaries would not be increased. But what was considered the most lethal amendment—to eliminate the gasoline tax—was offered by a conservative activist, Steve Symms, of Idaho, and it was several tense hours before Mitchell and Dole knew they had enough votes to block it.



In the midst of the long budget spectacle that so many found so unedifying, Mitchell and Dole in fact exercised real leadership—the kind of bipartisan coöperation that suggested what just might have been possible, given a more sensible approach on the part of the White House. The Senate is a less emotional place than the House, though not a fundamentally braver one (the six-year term offers senators little comfort anymore), but its rules make any debate much harder to control. Whereas House leaders think in terms of blocs of votes—the New York delegation, the California delegation, moderate Southerners, conservative Southerners—Senate leaders have to get their votes one by one. An argument used by Mitchell and his allies was that if the Senate would just send this bill to conference with the House, the final outcome would look more like the House bill, and more pleasing to Senate liberals. While that worked at the time, it didn't anticipate (at least overtly) the obvious next problem: if a more liberal bill couldn't be got through the Senate in the first place, why would the Senate be much more hospitable to one later on? All that Mitchell did to keep matters under control will probably never be known, but at least some of his success stemmed from the fact that his members have come to respect him, and some from the powers of his leadership position. A Senate aide says, "Every senator has a pet bill he wants the leadership to schedule, so a senator keeps score. A senator doesn't want to challenge the Majority Leader too often." Dole, the Minority Leader, also has favors to dispense. Dole is said to be a master at marshalling votes, as was Mitchell's predecessor, Robert Byrd, of West Virginia. Mitchell's powers are growing, the Senate aide says, but he is still learning. However, he did well enough on the budget. Some of the Senate votes on amendments were excruciatingly close. And the vote to pass the Senate budget was narrow (54–46)—almost half of the Republicans and Democrats, including most of the Democratic candidates, voted against it. This left Mitchell and Dole without a great deal of room for compromise.

THERE was so much focus on the issue of taxes throughout the budget debate that little attention was paid

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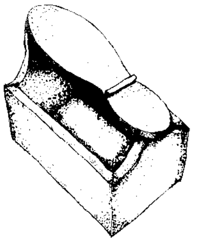

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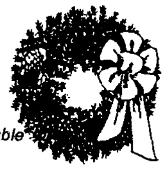

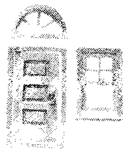

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to the issue of why it is so difficult to cut spending—but that is half the story. The fact is that though individual citizens vehemently call for less "government spending"—which also reflects their frustration at what they see as poor delivery of government services—they don't want cuts in programs that benefit them, and in many cases want increases. Because members of Congress engage in logrolling to protect the programs their own constituents most want, and are willing to cut programs for the poor only so far, few programs get eliminated. (The same logrolling principle explains why no major weapons systems got cut out of this year's defense bill.) The "discretionary" domestic programs were in fact cut in the early nineteen-eighties, to the point where there developed a bipartisan consensus that that cutting had gone about as far as it could. Republican Presidents, including Bush, have long since stopped asking for serious spending cuts, both because they, too, are caught up in the politics of spending programs and because their own officials have things they want to do. Darman, for example, is very keen on a manned trip to Mars (at a cost of four hundred billion dollars). This fall, even the conservative Sununu told frustrated Republican operatives that there were real limits on how much spending could be cut. The greatest portion of domestic spending is in the "entitlement" programs—programs such as Social Security, Medicare, federal pensions—in which the benefits grow automatically with inflation, and which now constitute nearly fifty per cent of the federal budget. Medicare is the second fastest growing account in the federal budget (interest on the debt is the fastest). But such is the power of the elderly lobby that neither party wanted to touch Social Security benefits, and a big reason the first deal failed was because it made $60 billion in cuts in Medicare. The final bill reduced that bite to about $42 billion, and rearranged the cuts and the taxes so as to make current workers, through more taxes, and health-care providers (hospitals and doctors) take the brunt of them. Meanwhile, the income transfer from workers to the retired continues apace—and someday there may be a rebellion. Until there is, Congress will remain loath to confront the well-organized elderly lobby.

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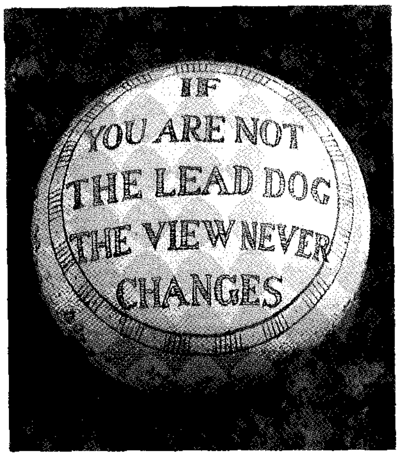

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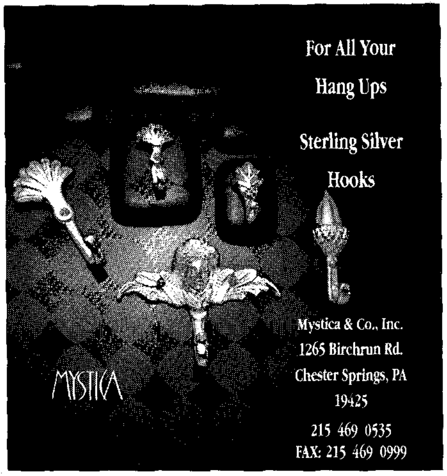
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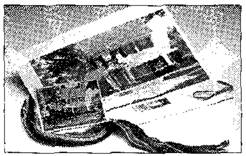

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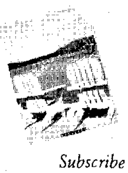

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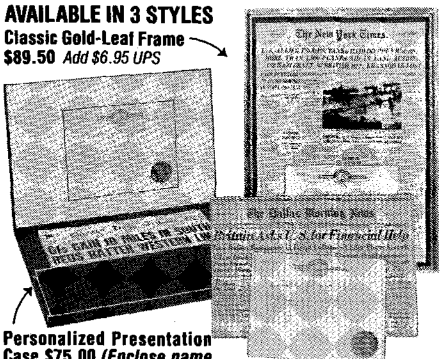

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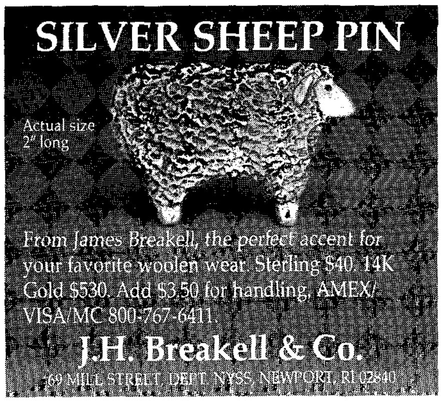

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board fashion with the aptly named entitlement programs—people who receive them see them as their God-given due—the deficit cutters missed a major opportunity this year. It wouldn't have been easy, but a fair, across-the-board cut, one that had bipartisan backing, might have had a chance. Agriculture programs were cut, and actually took the biggest hit (Darman was determined to cut them, and the political strength of the farm bloc is weakening), and some liberal members of Congress who made noble-sounding complaints about the unfairness of the deficit-cutting packages were also trying to save their constituents' bacon. The final bill ostensibly froze discretionary programs, allowing them to grow over-all *only* by the cost of inflation, for three years (spending for these programs could be shifted around), but the negotiators padded the starting point (the "baseline") to provide for actual increases in discretionary spending. In this instance, the smart, wily Darman was bested by the formidable, wily Robert Byrd, now the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. For the final two years, spending for both military and domestic programs was thrown into the same pot, so that leaders could tell those who wanted to cut defense spending further (the agreement cut it some, but not a great deal) that it could be cut further in those years, and those who wanted to cut defense spending less could be told that it wouldn't be cut by too much. And, despite new "enforcement" mechanisms, everyone knows that three years from now is a political millennium. While Republicans complained, at least for the record, that the deficit-cutting package didn't cut spending enough, some Democrats worried that they had bought their way into a budgetary straitjacket that would give Bush the upper hand in the next couple of years. But such thinking underestimates the ingenuity of Democrats; some are already planning new proposals to further "tax the rich" and use the proceeds to increase spending for various programs.

THE working out of a final deal was as difficult as the politics of the time, the political exigencies of each party and the different party mathematics in the House and the Senate, and the stubbornness, and even incompetence, of the White House could make it. Many of these stresses had become inevitable. But the President's behavior was nearly schizophrenic, reflecting the conflicting advice he was receiving and his own split identity. Within a single week, he was out campaigning and lambasting Washington as if he had never lived there and had nothing to do with it ("Oh, how nice it is to be out where the real people are, outside of Washington, D.C.!")—reminiscent of the George Bush who will say anything in a campaign—and he went to Capitol Hill to be photographed meeting with the budget negotiators. Similarly, he was buffeted by conflicting advice over whether to shut the government down as various deadlines approached with no budget agreement in place, but, though he tried to blame the whole thing on Congress, he appears to have paid a price for shutting the government down over the Columbus Day weekend. And day after day Foley publicly said that if the President shut down the government again it would be an unnecessary inconvenience to innocent citizens. (Although many of his flock find Foley too conciliatory to the Administration, he has a very well honed set of political instincts, and his less partisan approach allowed him to deliver privately a couple of tough messages to the Administration and be heard, and he ended up serving his flock well.) In an effort to keep the President from succeeding in his efforts to blame the one shutdown on Congress, Foley had vehemently criticized it as unnecessary. In the end, the President chose not to shut down the government again. But he and his negotiators were by now playing with a weak hand, and played it badly.

At the end of the week before last, the Administration decided to give in on both tax rates and capital gains but to resist a surcharge on million-dollar incomes. The rationale later offered by White House aides was that the surcharge was bad policy that would amount to yet another tax rate—but there was also resistance to putting a special tax on this particular income group. For Republicans, this set of White House decisions was the worst of all worlds. There was actually a certain cleverness to the way in which the Administration gave up on rates, but this was something few understood. What many fit-to-be-tied Republicans

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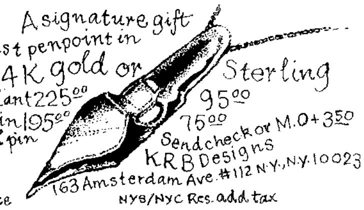

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saw was that first the President had broken his tax pledge but sent word forth that he wouldn't accept any increase in tax rates, and now he was raising tax rates. Even people within the Administration worried that this opened the way to further increases in tax rates in the future. When, in the end, the Administration offered a thirty-one-per-cent top rate, it turned the concept of "eliminating the bubble" on its head, and called the Democrats' bluff, because this new rate constituted a tax *cut* for the more than four million families who were "in the bubble," or paying at the thirty-three-per-cent marginal rate. It would, however, constitute a tax increase for some (but not all) of the roughly six hundred thousand high-income people who have been paying at the after-bubble marginal rate of twenty-eight per cent. (Under the Administration's proposal, people who had been in the bubble wouldn't be paying a net tax increase until their incomes reached over two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.) By this time, the Administration was working by its own internal logic, which went that a new rate of thirty-one per cent was acceptable both because it constituted a tax cut for a large group of people and because it was virtually revenue-neutral. A rate of thirty-two per cent, in other words, would have been a real tax increase, because it would have raised more revenue. So, by holding on so long to the capital gains issue the Administration had so weakened its position that it had to give up on both capital gains and rates. At the same time, by resisting the surtax on million-dollar incomes, it reinforced the picture of an Administration that favored the rich. But the Administration said it was "collapsing the bubble," and hardly anyone understood the difference between what the Democrats had meant by that and what the Administration was now proposing, so the Democrats, deprived now of the rates issue, seized upon the surtax.

The surtax wasn't a particularly wonderful idea, because there would be numerous ways to shift income around to make it come out at less than that level, but the Democrats had a splendid time milking the issue for a few days. An aide to the House Democratic leadership said to me, "The surtax is our Pledge of Allegiance. Bush went around in the campaign saying 'Why

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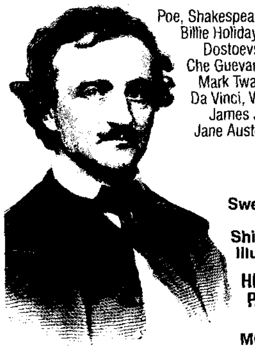

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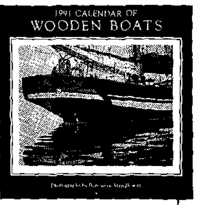

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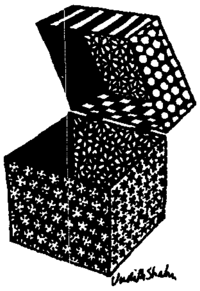
shouldn't teachers lead students in saying the Pledge of Allegiance?' and now we're saying 'Why shouldn't people who earn a million dollars pay a higher tax?'" (Gephardt has formed a "message group" of about fifteen articulate House Democrats who pound home themes in the one-minute statements before the day's legislative business begins, and through other stratagems try to get a coherent Democratic message into the daily news cycle.) A Republican pollster says, "Through our incompetence, we let the Democrats reform the New Deal coalition—at least for a while." Furthermore, the Democrats couldn't accept a final deal that cut taxes for the upper middle class, as the Administration's proposed thirty-one-per-cent rate would. And because members of Congress, who are now paid $96,600, are "in the bubble," some suspected that the Administration's proposal was a trap to get members of Congress to cut their own taxes —and then take a great deal of abuse. To boot, House members are to get a pay raise, to $125,400, in January. The Administration finally got itself out of its bind on the surtax by proposing a disallowance of eight per cent of deductions against million-dollar incomes. In early October, the idea of limiting deductions in lieu of increasing rates had come into the discussions. Though it would be a further complication of the tax code, and a back-door way of raising rates, it seemed to offer a way out. But delegations from states with high taxes (which are now deductible against federal income taxes)—particularly the large delegations from New York and California—resisted the idea, as much for the precedent it would set for future limitations (the "camel's nose" theory) as for any near-term discomfort it might cause. (People with the same income would be penalized by the same amount no matter what the level of their state taxes, unless someone from a low-tax state had paltry deductions.) Though a small limitation was in the original budget deal, the House dropped it from its proposal, but the Senate, where large states hold no particular sway, and which had made a deal not to raise rates, did approve some limitations on deductions.

The idea of imposing an even higher limitation on deductions for million-dollar incomes was the Administration's way of getting out of yet another corner—and it provoked (probably not accidentally) a big, if little-noticed in the rest of the cacophony, fracas between the Administration and New York Governor Mario Cuomo, and, in time, between Cuomo and House Democratic leaders. Cuomo opposed any limitation on deductions—and publicly attacked the final plan on this and other grounds. Cuomo criticized the House Democrats for "accepting unfairness in the name of practicality," and this didn't go over very well with the Democratic leadership, who also believed that Cuomo was thinking about 1992. Corporate interests in New York weighed in with Democrats against the special limitation on million-dollar incomes, saying that such a provision might cause them to move their businesses from New York. So the Democrats and the White House were at a standoff over the surtax or the special limitation on deductions for million-dollar incomes, and early last week the President was getting some internal advice to break things off until after the elections and blame the Democrats—and argue that it was "Mario's millionaires" who had brought the whole thing down. (On Sunday night, Secretary of State James Baker, at Darman's behest—Baker was once Darman's mentor—went to the President to urge him to make a deal and change the subject.) The White House, aware that Cuomo might run for the Presidency in 1992, has been gunning for him for a while, but whether it could have electrified the country with this issue is in question. That the President's advisers considered using it was a sign of what a curlicue White House thinking had become. In the end, both sides, fearing a tremendous backlash if the negotiations broke down again, backed off, and dropped their respective proposals to impose a special tax on million-dollar incomes.

The House Democratic caucus, which had balked at the first budget deal, balked one more time, with many liberals complaining that once again their leaders were accommodating the Administration and the Senate (they argued that the surtax should be passed by Congress and sent to the President to veto)—but this complaint overlooked both the mathematics and political reality. There weren't the votes in the Senate for a budget containing the surtax. Cuomo and his representatives were also stirring up trouble by opposing any limitation at all on deductions, as now sought by the Democratic leaders, and as contained in the first budget deal and in the Senate plan. The purposes of proposing to disallow some deductions were both to make sure that people who had been paying taxes at bubble rates didn't get a net tax cut and to recoup some of the revenue that would have been gained from the surtax. Aides to the Democratic leadership were quite tough with Cuomo's representatives, warning that if the deal failed because it lacked the votes of the New York delegation they would say that it had been brought down by Newt Gingrich and Mario Cuomo. (It had been assumed all along that Democrats would have to provide most of the House votes for any final deal.) Key Democrats here made calls to key allies of Cuomo's in New York—and eventually Cuomo backed down. (The new plan will disallow three per cent of deductions for individuals with incomes of over a hundred thousand dollars.) At the same time, the House Democratic caucus sobered up and decided it was time to make a deal and go home. The new disallowance of deductions would add about a percentage point to people's taxes, but this still left the deal short of revenue and of making sure that bubble people didn't get a tax cut. So, in a kind of cosmic joke, a new bubble was created—in which individuals with incomes of over a hundred thousand dollars and couples with incomes over a hundred and fifty thousand dollars and filing a joint return would have their personal exemptions phased out. A similar concept, starting at a somewhat lower income level, was behind the original bubble. In the end, with all the backdoor rate increases and the increased Medicare tax, people earning over a hundred thousand dollars could pay, in effect, at a rate of from thirty-three to over thirty-five per cent. But the new top average income tax rate had moved from twenty-eight to twenty-nine per cent, still historically low, and lower than any other industrial country. Also, because of the new rate of thirty-one per cent, a capital gains differential of twenty-eight per cent was established, so that the tax on capital gains wouldn't be too high. But because of the backdoor income tax increases—the limitation on deductions and the phase-out of the personal exemptions—the actual tax on capital gains was effectively raised for the wealthiest taxpayers. This wasn't exactly what the Bush Administration had had in mind.



In the final couple of days, there was still much haggling over details, and the final budget bill undoubtedly contains all kinds of junk that will take some time to ferret out. Several tax breaks were included in it, including one for oil and gas. In part, this was there to mollify some politicians upset over the increase in gasoline taxes in the final deal. Certain provisions that individual senators—including Mitchell—had put in to take care of particular interests in their states were removed, because House Democrats were making a stink about them. Once the New York rebellion was quelled, the last rebellion, on the last day, was staged by the Congressional Black Caucus, which has twenty-three members and was in a rage over Bush's veto of the civil-rights bill. (The bill wasn't, as Bush termed it, a "quota bill"; the Administration had for some time thought it had a political winner in the "quota" issue, and preferred having the issue to reaching a compromise.) House Democratic leaders worked all day last Friday to calm the Black Caucus members down, but succeeded in winning the votes of only ten of them, as the leaders worked into the night to get enough votes to pass the final budget. Their job was made no easier by the fact that on that day both the President and Sununu were attacking the plan, and it wasn't until that evening that they began to have confidence that they would have enough votes. At 6:58 A.M. on Saturday, the House adopted the final budget, by a vote of 228–200, and with the support of only forty-seven Republicans; the Senate followed suit late Saturday afternoon. There was still other work to do, and finally, on Sunday, exhausted members of Congress staggered out of town to face their constituents, while the President prepared to attack Congress.

—ELIZABETH DREW

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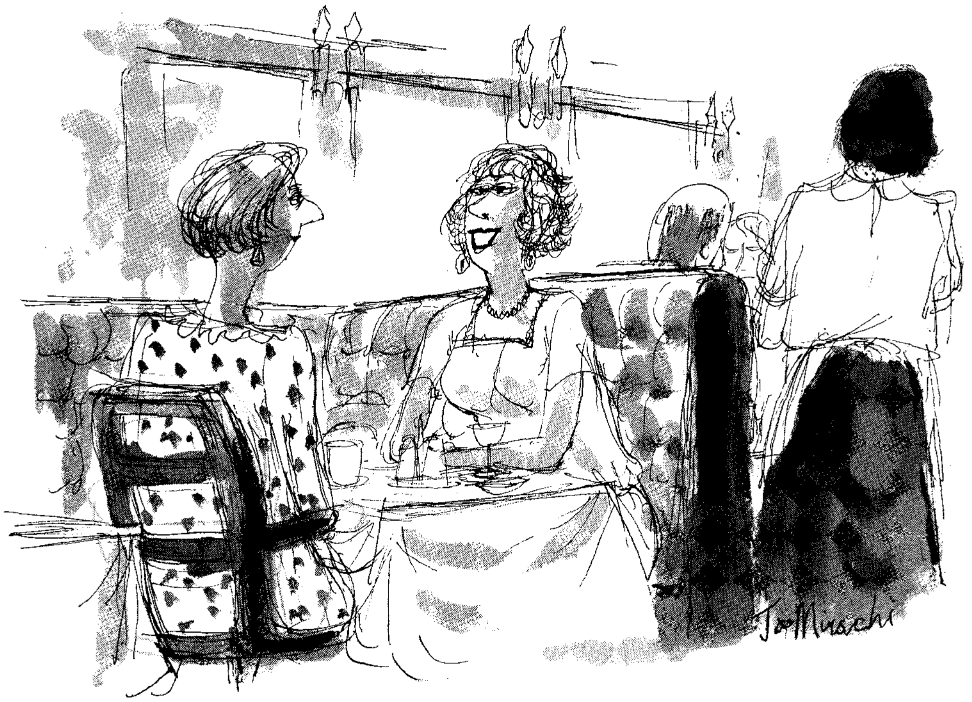
BOOKS

Posthumous Work and Beautiful Subjects

IN 1955, responding to the National Book Award conferred on his "Collected Poems," Wallace Stevens said that the poet should "put on the strength of his particular calling as a poet, to address himself to what Rilke called the mighty burden of poetry and to have the courage to say that, in his sense of things, the significance of poetry is second to none." He added, "We can never have great poetry unless we believe that poetry serves great ends." Stevens died shortly after making this speech, leaving behind not only late prose of this sort but also juvenilia, plays, and verse written after the publication of the "Collected Poems." The poet Samuel French Morse collected most of these leftovers in a book, published in 1957, to which he gave the Stevensian title "Opus Posthumous." This collection has now been reëdited by Milton J. Bates (the author of an excellent recent study of Stevens), and includes additional early poems, some more prose, another play, and the answers Stevens gave to various questionnaires. Bates has also put together, for Stanford University Press, a facsimile of Stevens' commonplace book—"a book," the poet said, "in which I collect things that I don't want to forget." Stevens gave his notebook a title he borrowed from a late-sixteenth-century French manuscript: "Sur Plusieurs Beaux Sujects." It and the expanded "Opus Posthumous" (Knopf; $30) shed new light on Stevens' notably reticent, and notably original, mind.

Stevens' originality is often expressed in a deadpan way that the careless reader can miss altogether. By profession he was an insurance lawyer and handled surety claims for the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company; surely no odder articles on insurance have ever been written than two that Bates has reprinted in "Opus Posthumous." The insurer "insures all people against all happenings of everyday life, even the worm in the apple or the piano out of tune," Stevens remarks. "These are instances of insurance as it exists; and if they were not, there would be Lloyds or the future." The turn beginning "if they were not, there would be" is characteristic of Stevens, as is a later sentence: "It helps us to see the actual world to visualize a fantastic world." That for him was the use of the "fantastic world" of his poems: to help him see the actual world. He insisted on the normal and the actual as his subject, but the way to the subject was through "making the actual a little hard to see"—by creating a fiction of life on another plane. Sometimes the alternative fictive plane was exquisite, sometimes grotesque, sometimes whimsical, sometimes tragic: "Poetry creates a fictitious existence on an exquisite plane. This definition must vary as the plane varies, an exquisite plane being merely illustrative." This adage from the commonplace book reveals Stevens' typical way of rethinking his first thought. If the idealism typical of his education produces the "exquisite plane," his adherence to reality produces his second sentence, which recognizes that a different definition might read "Poetry creates a fictitious existence on a hideous plane" (Poe's stories), or "Poetry creates a fictitious existence on a historical plane" (Scott). The important thing for Stevens is the fictitious nature of the plane on which one lives while composing or reading poetry. "To read a poem should be an experience, like experiencing an act," he says, and "The poem is a nature created by the poet." It should contain "the full flower of the actual, not the California fruit of the ideal." The twenty-two pages of aphorisms collected in "Opus Posthumous" are irresistibly quotable, but they will mean most to those who already know Stevens' poetry.



"I don't think of it as alimony. I consider it a peace dividend."

The aim of Stevens' poetry is to refresh life, to reveal the *élan vital* that forever bursts through the stale, the accustomed, and the tedious. Stevens set himself deliberately against those who would maintain tradition simply because it is traditional. If Eliot is the advocate of the old among the modernists, Stevens is the advocate of the new. For him, tradition is represented not by the institutional (as for Eliot) but by the familial: it is Aeneas bearing his father, Anchises, on his back, not out of duty but out of love. Eliot could not admit that tradition had its permanent casualties; he wanted to save even fragments, and shored those *disjecta membra* against his own ruins. Stevens was willing to contemplate with genuine

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enthusiasm the pagan, the primitive, and even the raw as replacements for the vanishing past.

In this, Stevens was defiantly American. Unlike Pound and Eliot, who mentally expatriated themselves into the European and the Asian past, Stevens, with a Pennsylvania Dutch placidity, continued to live in the American present. He never went to Europe; though he bought French pictures (sight unseen, from a Paris dealer) and read French and Spanish journals, he and his poetry sat squarely in American contemplation of an American present and an unknown future. Even in "Opus Posthumous," his critique of the European past is unmistakable—notably in a major poem of 1936 called "Owl's Clover."

Stevens himself deleted this manifesto from the "Collected Poems" after publishing a version of it in his 1937 volume, "The Man with the Blue Guitar." "Owl's Clover" was provoked by a review in *New Masses* that reproached Stevens for not producing socialist art. The review stung him into articulating his differences both from academic preservers of the traditional Eurocentric canon and from advocates of socialist realism. Against a splendid American marble statue of winged horses straining upward (a canonical image of aesthetic inspiration) Stevens sets, in the opening canto of "Owl's Clover," an old woman in black (his symbol of those whom the Depression had made too poor and too deprived to respond to any work of art deriving from the past). As the horizon of the poem broadens, we see, in addition, how useless the European-derived statue would be in Africa, with its different mythology and different climate. And yet we also see the dismal failure of "the newest Soviet réclame," the "Concerto for Airplane and Pianoforte"—a "profound / Abortion, fit for the enchanting of basilisks."

In maintaining his resolutely centrist position, refusing to write either for the European lyre or for the Soviet airplane, Stevens looked for ways to be American while remaining true both to himself and to art. He disliked the blunt imperialist role assigned to men by modern society, and in "Life on a Battleship" (a 1939 poem also dropped from the "Collected Poems" and included here) he mocked the mperial rule of life predicated by the captain of a (fictitious) battleship called The Masculine. The captain supposes:

> Suppose I seize
> The ship, make it my own and, bit by bit,
> Seize yards and docks, machinery and men,
> As others have, and then, unlike the others,
> Instead of building ships, in numbers, build
> A single ship, a cloud on the sea, the largest
> Possible machine, a divinity of steel,
> Of which I am captain. Given what I intend,
> The ship would become the centre of the world.

This naked theology of the aggressive self seemed to Stevens fit only for ogres. In one of his early poems, three girls make a plot against a giant, a "yokel. . . / Whetting his hacker": pitying this lumbering and maundering male primitive who is intent on murder, they plan to educate him to civil fragrances and small printed textiles, even to "undo him" by whispering "heavenly labials in a world of gutturals."

Stevens' ideal of a desirable masculinity eventually became personified in the figure of the hidalgo, the Spanish nobleman who combines reserve, power, and elegance. This figure for life as a man might live it without baseness became for Stevens a version of the Muse:

> *C'est toujours la vie qui me regarde*
> . . . This was
> Who watched him, always, for unfaithful thought.
>
> This sat beside his bed, with its guitar,
> To keep him from forgetting, without a word,
> A note or two disclosing who it was.
>
> Nothing about him ever stayed the same,
> Except this hidalgo and his eye and tune,
> The shawl across one shoulder and the hat. . . .
>
> The hidalgo was permanent, abstract,
> A hatching that stared and demanded an answering look.

The first complete "answering look" that Stevens gave to life was his volume "Harmonium" (1923). It set against Botticelli's Venus, posed on a seashell as she rises from the sea, her new-minted American counterpart, who by comparison seems only a "paltry nude" starting on her spring voyage:

> But not on a shell, she starts,
> Archaic, for the sea.
> But on the first-found weed . . .
>
> She too is discontent
> And would have purple stuff
> upon her arms.

Poor and unadorned though this American Venus is, she is at least au-

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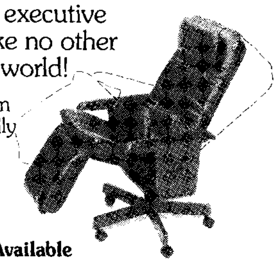

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thentic. She scours the sea bare, removing antique flotsam and jetsam; and she will eventually become "the goldener nude / Of a later day," who will go "across the spick torrent, ceaselessly, / Upon her irretrievable way."

Stevens, as such a poem suggests, knew the nostalgia of his generation for the vanished gods, classical and Christian ("It was their annihilation, not ours, and yet it left us feeling that in a measure we, too, had been annihilated"); but he was quick to add that "no man ever muttered a petition in his heart for the restoration of those unreal shapes." The great 1951 essay from which I take these quotations is modestly called "Two or Three Ideas." It is not included in Stevens' collected prose, but it may, like "Owl's Clover," be read afresh by a new generation in this reissue of "Opus Posthumous." Besides establishing Stevens as an opponent of cultural nostalgia, it will remind readers of his deep conviction that the root of art—and the necessity for art—springs from suffering and evil:

> Men in general do not create in light and warmth alone. They create in darkness and coldness. They create when they are hopeless, in the midst of antagonisms, when they are wrong, when their powers are no longer subject to their control. They create as the ministers of evil.

Anyone wanting an autobiographical statement from this least public of writers can find it in the above passage by substituting for the word "men" and its subsequent pronouns the pronoun "I"—a trick that reveals much in Stevens' poetry as well, where "he" and "we" are his habitual way of writing about himself while achieving an ironic distance from personal confession. This habit makes his poems less instantly understandable, perhaps, than a poem beginning "My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains / My sense." Brought up on the lyric "I" and its first-person revelations, I found it hard, as an adolescent, to understand that a poem could begin as Stevens' "Sunday Morning" does:

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,
And the green freedom of a cockatoo
Upon a rug mingle to dissipate
The holy hush of ancient sacrifice.

Nor did I understand Stevens' jokes, like the one in which the lyric particular self (a bantam rooster) addresses the philosophical universal (a full-sized rooster):

Fat! Fat! Fat! Fat! I am the personal.
Your world is you. I am my world.

You ten-foot poet among inchlings. Fat!
Begone!

Nor did I understand Stevens' fidelity to American aesthetic poverty in the middle of wilderness terrain—a gray bare jar in Tennessee in place of the marble Grecian urns in European museums. He played, in his "Anecdote of the Jar," the American illiterate who couldn't write a decent, scanning, rhyming English quatrain:

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

"No, no," says the English critic. "You can't rhyme the rhyme word with itself, and your last line has only three beats, not four, like the others."

"Oh, all right," says the American incompetent, and continues his verses:

The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.
The jar was round upon the ground
And tall and of a port in air.

"No, no," breaks in the English critic. "I see you've taken my point about all the lines having to have four beats, and the rhyme words having to begin with different consonants. But you've put your two rhyme words in the same line, and that's not our custom in English quatrains. The rhyme words have to come at the end of the line."

"Oh, is that so?" says the untutored colonial. "Well, I can fix that," and he takes up his poem where he left off:

And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.
The jar was gray and bare.
It did not give of bird or bush,
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

"Good heavens," groans the English critic. "Now you've put all your rhymes one after another, but that's not right; in quatrains you are supposed to leave a line unrhymed between the rhymes; you can't have 'air' and 'everywhere' and 'bare' all following each other, and then two lines with no rhymes at all!" The Englishman then departs to tell the Empire how uncivilized the colonials still are, and the American silently enjoys his joke, while wondering how in the world he can bring bird, bush, and jar together in his wild Tennessee. This poem does

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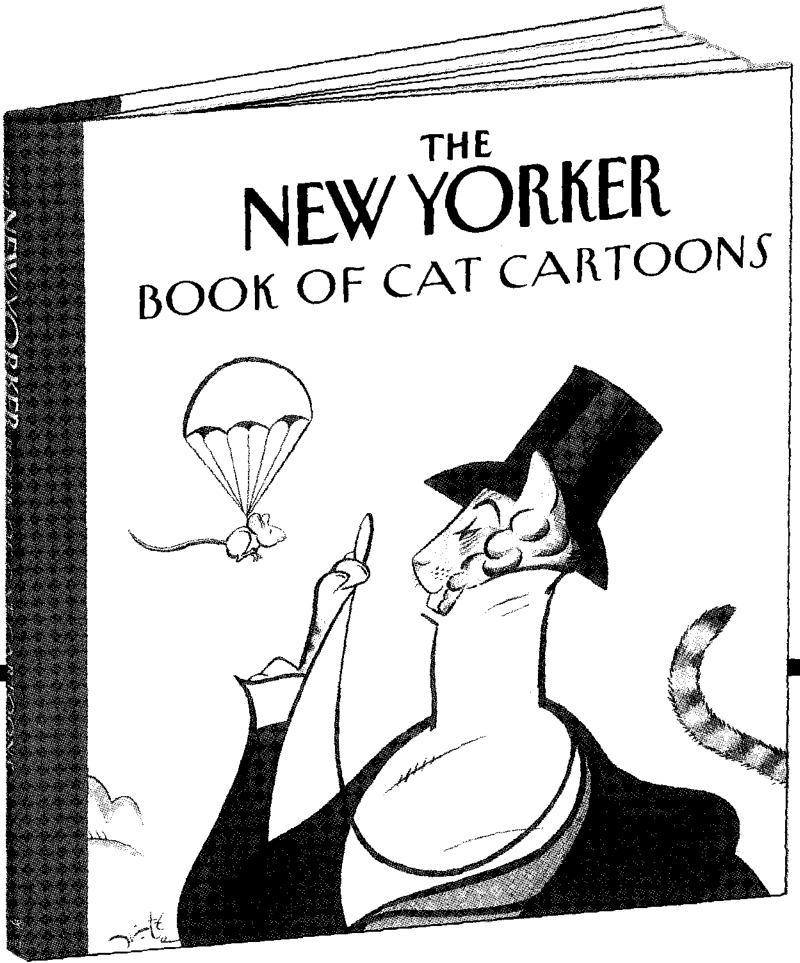
not, in nineteenth-century fashion, offer a discourse upon the American poet's dilemma; instead, in modernist fashion, it acts it out.

Stevens believed that a poem was not a statement but an act. The aphorisms collected in "Opus Posthumous" insist that poetry is not discursive. It does not relate thoughts about or propositions on a subject. Rather, it is what it represents: "The body is the great poem"; "A change of style is a change of subject"; "A poem need not have a meaning and like most things in nature often does not have"; "Ethics are no more a part of poetry than they are of painting"; "One reads poetry with one's nerves." All these remarks need to be followed, as Stevens says in his poem "Connoisseur of Chaos," by "pages of illustrations." Often such aphorisms are elucidated by material that turns up in his commonplace book —the remark on ethics, for instance, should be set next to Stevens' paraphrase of Flaubert: "*L'esthétique est une justice supérieure.*"

Stevens understood that to place, to give language and context to, anything within an aesthetic structure was to pronounce an implicit ethical judgment on it. This judgment, while not phrased in philosophical statement, could not be invisible to anyone capable of aesthetic response. The necessity of constructing an aesthetic structure implying an ethical judgment often makes true art works (including Stevens' poems) look odder than the essays-in-verse or letters-in-meter that go by the name of poetry. Stevens copied into his notebook George Chapman's outburst against those who desired poetry to be 'plain': "That plainness should be he special ornament of Poesy 'were the plain way to barbarism, and to make the Ass proud of his ears.' " Another instance of oblique self-justification from he commonplace book turns on Fauré: erhaps with his own elliptical yet traditio-based writing in mind, Stevens opied out some praise of Fauré that ad appeared in 1938 in the journal *crutiny:* "His writing is 'technically' rict, and his harmonic dialect rooted n the practice of his forbears, yet, by neans of these elliptical transitions and exible basses, he can produce chordal equences which are absolutely original nd inimitable."

Such passages in the notebook will ıst new light on Stevens' aesthetic, as ill the poems and adages included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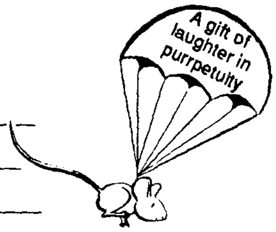
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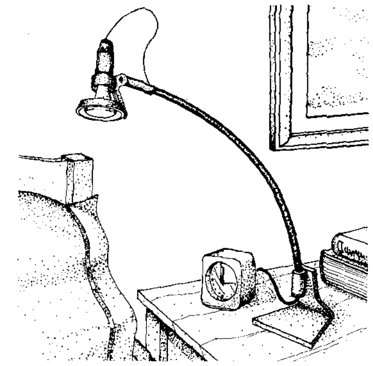

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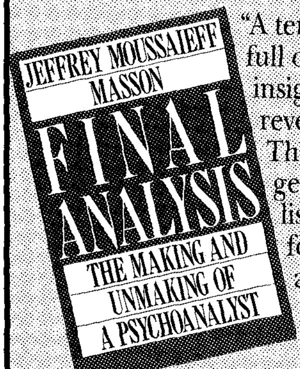

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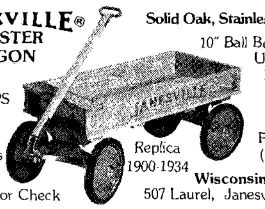

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in the revised "Opus Posthumous." Though the additional poems are mostly slight, each one of them suggests something vivid about Stevens' early gestures toward his subjects. There are, for instance, any number of English poems about birds; and perhaps American poetry, the young Stevens thinks, should have birds, too. But what sort of birds, and what should they be doing, and where? Since Stevens reflects on this question all his life, as a way of finding out what poetry should be and do, it is interesting to find out that he began, in "L'Essor Saccadé" (1913-15), with Keatsian swallows rising not only over death ("the widow's house") but also over the earth ("the white dog / That barks in the bushes") and over ordinary birds ("the pigeons / On the chimney"). Soon, in "Sunday Morning" (1915), Stevens will be reversing himself. His English swallows have metamorphosed into the widow's chimney pigeons, and instead of soaring above earthly contact they are heading downward to the earth:

> In the isolation of the sky,
> At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
> Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
> Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

Until now, we had not known that "Sunday Morning" was a recantation of "L'Essor Saccadé." The ordinary pigeons sinking downward to darkness symbolize a new duty for art: to settle down into the common, the ambiguous, and the deathly instead of evading materiality by a flight toward heaven.

Among the last poems Stevens wrote is his final meditation on where the bird of the imagination is situated and what it should do. This poem, "Of Mere Being," included in "Opus Posthumous," courageously maintains that the song of being as we find it in poetry is not phrased in the language we speak every day, though the language of the poem may deceptively resemble, say, "English." In poetry, all human meaning, human feeling, and human reason have been altered by being placed in a "bronze decor," an aesthetic structure of permanence. Marvell's garden bird, which "waves in its plumes the various light," is the ancestor of Stevens' exotic last bird, yet Marvell's bird soul is preparing for a "longer flight" to Paradise. Stevens' bird will stay on the ultimate horizon of the mind, and its feathers point down, not up. It sings and shines, but in a

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metallic fashion; it corrects Yeats' golden bird (which sang "of what is past, or passing, or to come") by refusing discursive content. Nonetheless, its song conveys knowledge and makes us happy:

> The palm at the end of the mind,
> Beyond the last thought, rises
> In the bronze decor,
>
> A gold-feathered bird
> Sings in the palm, without human
> meaning,
> Without human feeling, a foreign song.
>
> You know then that it is not the reason
> That makes us happy or unhappy.
> The bird sings. Its feathers shine.
>
> The palm stands on the edge of space.
> The wind moves slowly in the branches.
> The bird's fire-fangled feathers dangle down.

The refusals here are very strong: the bird sings *without* human meaning, *without* human feeling. Stevens means these assertions to apply to the song of being once it has been bronzed into the Horatian *monumentum aere perennius*. Those who dislike being reminded that art is not life may blanch at Stevens' iron distinctions. Yet he saves a place for life in art: "The real is only the base," he says. "But it is the base." Beyond art's base in the real, there is the "fictitious plane" on which Stevens' reader is taught to live, and from which he returns to the base a changed person. "It is life that we are trying to get at in poetry, " Stevens asserts, but since "the subjects of one's poems are the symbols of one's self or of one of one's selves," poems cannot be merely reportage on a non-symbolic plane; nor can they represent only the artificially unified social self.

The "power" exercised "over life by expressing life" seems to Stevens greater in the poet than in the novelist, because the poet exercises it "at more evels than the novelist, with more olors, with as much perception and ertainly with more music, not merely verb[illegible] music, but the rhythms and tones f human feeling." Such statements are ot provable, but they suggest Stevens' wn claims for his art, which was, in is mind, subordinate only to music, with its even subtler power of nuance. The principle of music," he wrote hortly before his death, "would be an ddition to humanity if it were not umanity itself, in other than human orm." He added, "While this hyper-ole is certain to be repulsive to a good many people, still it may stand." Such

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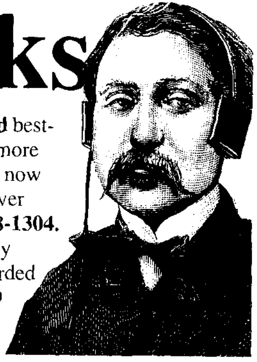

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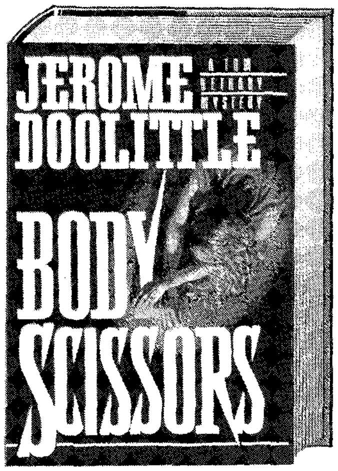

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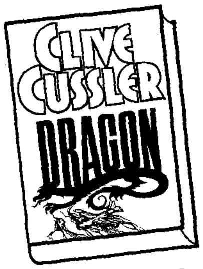

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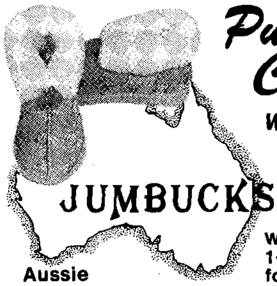

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a statement sums up a lifetime's belief.

Stevens' beliefs evolved during years of ordinary working days at the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company. He wrote about his business life with considerable irony, thinking back over his career first as a field representative ("You wind up by knowing every county court house in the United States") and later as a man working in the home office, in Hartford:

> A man in the home office tends to conduct his business on the basis of the papers that come before him. After twenty-five years or more of that sort of thing, he finds it difficult sometimes to distinguish himself from the papers he handles and comes almost to believe that he and his papers constitute a single creature, consisting principally of hands and eyes: lots of hands and lots of eyes.

And yet this business monster of many hands and many eyes—remote, even chilly, to the world—is in his writing the most delightful of companions, stringent in truthtelling but full of gaiety and surprise. He lights the candles of imagination—as in his early play "Carlos Among the Candles," reprinted here—and with each candle the world takes on a different tinge. As Carlos mocks his own proceedings, he says, recalling his progress from one candle to six, "In how short a time have I been solitary, then respectable—in a company so cold as to be stately, then elegant, then conscious of luxury, even magnificence; and now I come, gradually, to the beginning of splendor. Truly, I am a modern."

Truly, he was a modern, who found as much exhilaration (as Carlos goes on to show) in the extinguishings of splendor as in the creation of it. The reader who has the "Collected Poems" in mind while reading "Carlos Among the Candles" will recall the majestic late version of Carlos in Stevens' portrait of the kindling and extinction of cultures in "The Auroras of Autumn":

> Is there an imagination that sits enthroned
> As grim as it is benevolent, the just
> And the unjust, which in the midst of summer stops
>
> To imagine winter? . . .
>
> It leaps through us, through all our heavens leaps,
> Extinguishing our planets, one by one,
> Leaving, of where we were and looked, of where
>
> We knew each other and of each other thought,
> A shivering residue, chilled and foregone,
> Except for that crown and mystical cabala.

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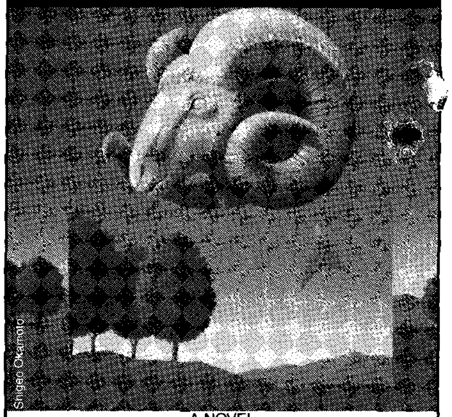

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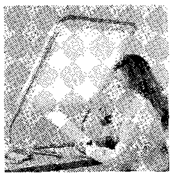

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And yet these tragic extinguishings, of planets instead of candles, are eventually reversed by a new comedy unmasking itself: "Say, a flippant communication under the moon." At the end of culture Stevens sees the incipience of a new cultural beginning. He never ceased to believe that existence itself was innocent; its renewal necessarily entailed our own personal and cultural mortality, which was therefore acceptable, and even welcome. This belief gives his verse in old age its peculiar resilience and sweetness as he prizes even the slightest intimations of continued newness and vitality. These intimations—a bird's "scrawny cry" in a spring dawn, the first glimpse in February of the "babyishness of forsythia"—are increasingly loved with each passing year. Many of the late poems found in "Opus Posthumous" are among the best summonings in literature of the freshness of life in old age.

With its First World War poems and the socially conscious "Owl's Clover," "Opus Posthumous" enables a juster view of Stevens' social awareness—summed up in his remark, in 1948, that "experiment that is merely experiment . . . seems, in the circumstances, to be a pastime proper for Nero's children's children." In choosing a selection of his poems for a 1942 anthology, Stevens had written, "The period during which they were written, the last twenty years, has been terribly alive, and these poems have been at least related to that life." It has become clearer, with the publication of the commonplace book and of the journals and letters (edited by Stevens' daughter, Holly), how much of the first half of the twentieth century in America Stevens encapsulates. In him we can find its philosophical skepticism and its human hopes, its wrong turnings (social and aesthetic) and its self-questionings, its relation to Europe and to Africa, its strained relations between the sexes and between the races, its need for an American art. He is the fulfillment of his own early determination, in his first manifesto, "The Comedian as the Letter C":

> What was the purpose of his pilgrimage . . .
> If not, when all is said, to drive away
> The shadow of his fellows from the skies,
> And, from their stale intelligence released,
> To make a new intelligence prevail?

Stevens found a way to make that new intelligence prevail, and consequently his style of doing it is now inimitable (no matter how many subsequent poets have imitated it, and him). But his principles remain as young as ever. Here they are, as he sketched them for the anthologist who asked him about his poetics:

> Poetry is neither politics nor philosophy. Poetry is poetry, and one's objective as a poet is to achieve poetry, precisely as one's objective in music is to achieve music. There are poets who would regard that as a scandal and who would say that a poem that had no importance except its importance as poetry had no importance at all, and that a poet who had no objective except to achieve poetry was a fribble and something less than a man of reason. We have a curious way, however, of being dependent on unexpected things, and among these are the unexpected transformations of poetry.

The power of poetry resides in precisely that aesthetic arrangement which cannot be sacrificed to an exterior intellectual or moral end without losing all potential for rendering its own, Flaubertian justice. The "terribly alive" poems and prose of Stevens' maturity stand as validation of the uprightness of aesthetic principle. Until we have a "Complete Poetry and Prose" of this indispensable poet, the reissued and expanded "Opus Posthumous" and the newly published notebook, "Sur Plusieurs Beaux Sujects," are necessary and welcome companions to the "Collected Poems."

—HELEN VENDLER

BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

SAMS IN A DRY SEASON, by Ivan Gold (Houghton Mifflin; $19.95). Mr. Gold's first novel in twenty years deftly overcomes a considerable double handicap: (1) it's about a writer, and (2) the writer is a drunk. The plot follows that well-mapped route down into Hell and back, taking Jason Sams, a failed novelist living and teaching in Boston, through a single weekend in New York, during which he meets with agent, family, and friends, consumes stupefying amounts of booze, hits bottom, and then, shakily, and with the help of a smart and patient wife, climbs on the wagon. What saves all this from sentimentality and self-pity is Mr. Gold's honesty, which is both lacerating and extremely funny, and the loopy extravagance of his prose—dazzling Rube Goldberg sentences,

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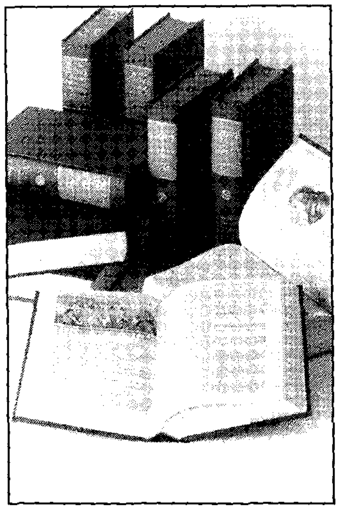

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some of them a page long, that double back on themselves, shoot off in unexpected directions, and then hurtle forward without ever missing a beat. The book turns sober at the end, but the writing, luckily, does not.

Hourglass, by Danilo Kiš, translated from the Serbo-Croatian by Ralph Manheim (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $22.95). This story of a fifty-three-year-old retired railway inspector—a Leopold Bloom-like figure known only as E.S.—is the final installment of an unofficial trilogy about the vanishing world of Hungarian Jews before and during the Second World War. The novel's technically wide-ranging chapters are a set of variations on an actual letter written by the author's father, who died in Auschwitz. The book's allusiveness is rich: Nabokovian jokes and wordplay; precise, painterly description reminiscent of the *nouveau roman;* prose of Biblical sensuousness. Kiš, however, is tenaciously original, particularly in his dreamy detachment from accruing horrors; this emotional indirection helps create the novel's devastating effects. It's a pity that the author, who died last year, did not see the publication of Mr. Manheim's clear, distractionless translation. A portion of the book originally appeared in *The New Yorker*.

That Time in Malomba, by James Hamilton-Paterson (Soho; $18.95). The central character in this comedy of culture clash is Laki, a fifteen-year-old bellboy at a run-down hotel in the fictive holy city of Malomba, where psychedelic drugs are hawked on the street and Jewish and Christian outposts vie with thirty-odd Eastern sects. Laki is called Lucky by the dopey hippies he lures to his hotel, and he considers himself lucky to have free food on his job, and a broken-down pigeon loft on the hotel roof where he can keep his paltry treasures of clothing and a slingshot secreted in an aphrodisiac vine growing through it. It may be the scent of this vine that makes it possible for him to seduce all three members of the family he decides will be his ticket to the wealthy West: the dizzy mother, who frequently reassures herself by murmuring "Bliss"; the petulant, just pubescent son; and, at last, the teen-age daughter, whose long blond hair defines beauty here for the poor and dark. Laki's lot is so circumscribed and hard, and he is so enterprising and canny, that one cheers for him, and, unlikely though it is that things will work out in this close to the worst of all possible worlds, they are buoyed by humor and suspense.

Note: "When Life Falls It Falls Upside Down," a novel by Lou Myers, has been published by Grove Weidenfeld ($17.95). Much of the contents first appeared here.

GENERAL

The Polk Conspiracy, by Kati Marton (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $22.95). In 1948, George Polk, the CBS News correspondent in Greece, was murdered in Salonika. This book tells us what led up to the crime, and details the high-level hugger-mugger involved in its official solution. Greece, ruled by a right-wing government embroiled in a civil war with Communist rebels, was the recipient of a heavy investment of United States aid in the Truman Administration's effort to halt Soviet expansion. Polk, a brilliant young member of Edward R. Murrow's team of foreign correspondents, had been critical of the regime, and had threatened to expose particulars of official corruption. It was imperative for the Greeks, and for the American State Department, that the murder not be seen as a right-wing measure to silence a dangerous critic, so the official cry was that the Communists must have killed Polk. An investigation was launched, an arrest demanded, and a suspect found, duly processed, and convicted in a show trial. Ms. Marton's handling of this tale of coverup is a model piece of writing—a calm exposition of facts leading to an inexorable conclusion that brings home to us the price we paid for the Cold War. Photographs.

The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy, by Kirkpatrick Sale (Knopf; $24.95). An account of the discovery and early settlement by Europeans of the Caribbean islands and the North American mainland, and of the growth of Columbus's reputation over the centuries. The author's lucid, vigorous prose is a delight, whether he is narrating perilous passages at sea or steering us through the hazards of learned disputes. Unfortunately, his purpose is to persuade us to remodel our society in order to preserve the environment, and, with tendentious selectivity, he portrays greedy, violent, and ignorant Europeans despoiling idyllic egalitarian Native American societies and the indigenous ecosystems that the Indians inhabited without disturbing them. Mr. Sale's use of a visionary past to belittle the pres[illegible] isn't history; it's propaganda.

Beirut Fragments: A War Memoir, by Jean Said Makdisi (Persea; $19.95). The author, a Protestant Palestinian whose family was dispossessed by the Israelis, grew up in Cairo and went to college in the United States. She and her Lebanese husband eventually decided to make Beirut their home, and her resolve to put down roots has so far survived the pulverization of that once flourishing cosmopolitan commercial center. This book recounts her experience of the civil wars that began in 1975, and it attains the vividness of a nightmare. She portrays the surreal juxtapositions of urban warfare as upper-middle-class families like hers try to maintain their daily routines—dinner parties, housework, university teaching—while bombs and artillery are literally bringing their world down around them. She doesn't attempt a history of the disputes that led to the formation of Lebanon's sectarian armies; everyone she knows, she tells us, whether Christian or Muslim, is religiously tolerant, and as baffled as she is by the savagery of the country's religious conflicts.

Note: "Profiles," a collection of biographical essays by Kenneth Tynan, has been published by HarperCollins ($14.95, paper). Some of the pieces originally appeared here. . . . "Mixed Company," a collecti[illegible] of drawings by Michael Maslin, has been published by Fireside ($7.95, paper). Many of the drawings first appeared here. . . . "The New Yorker Book of Cat Cartoons" has been published by Knopf ($16.95).

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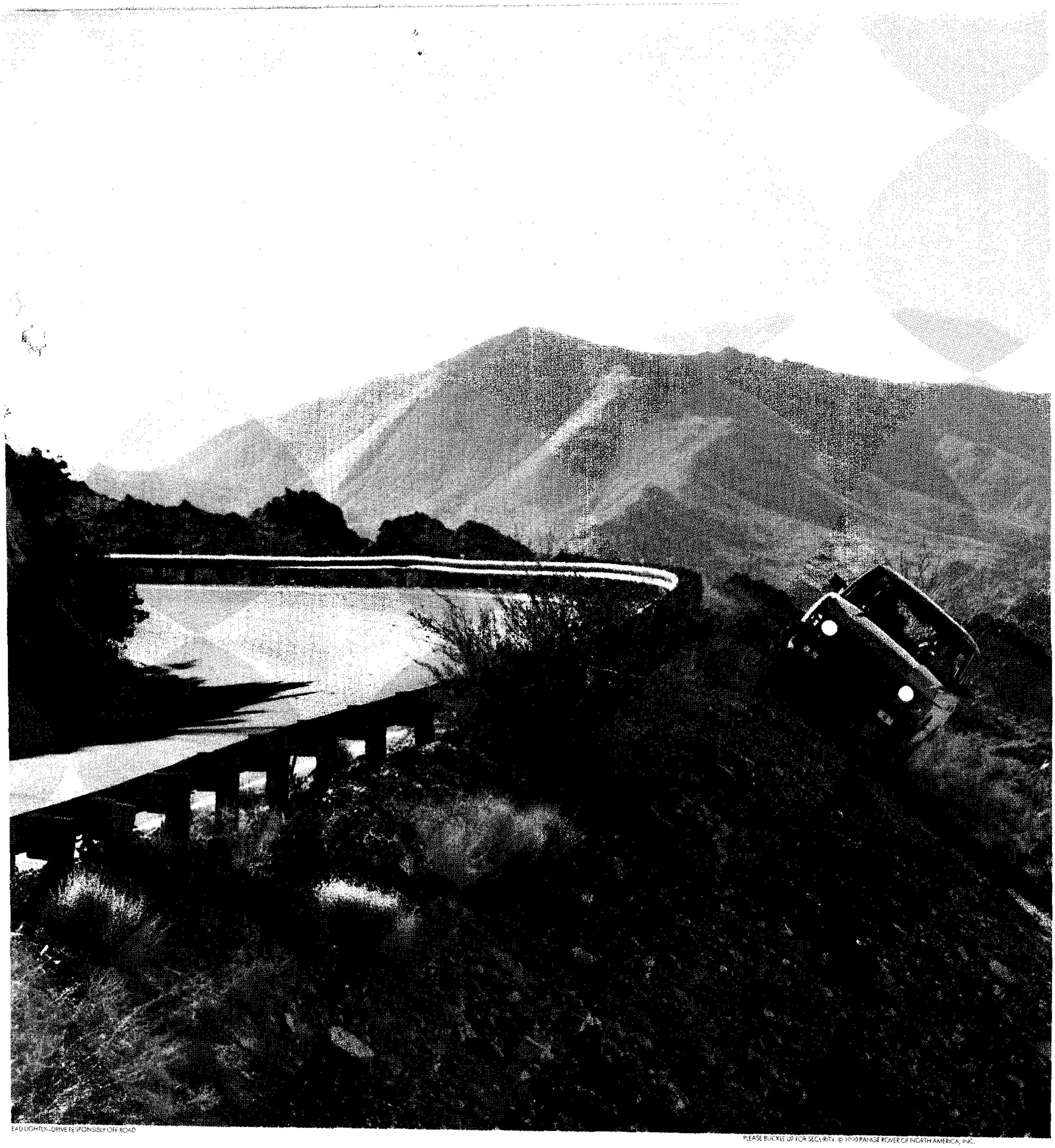

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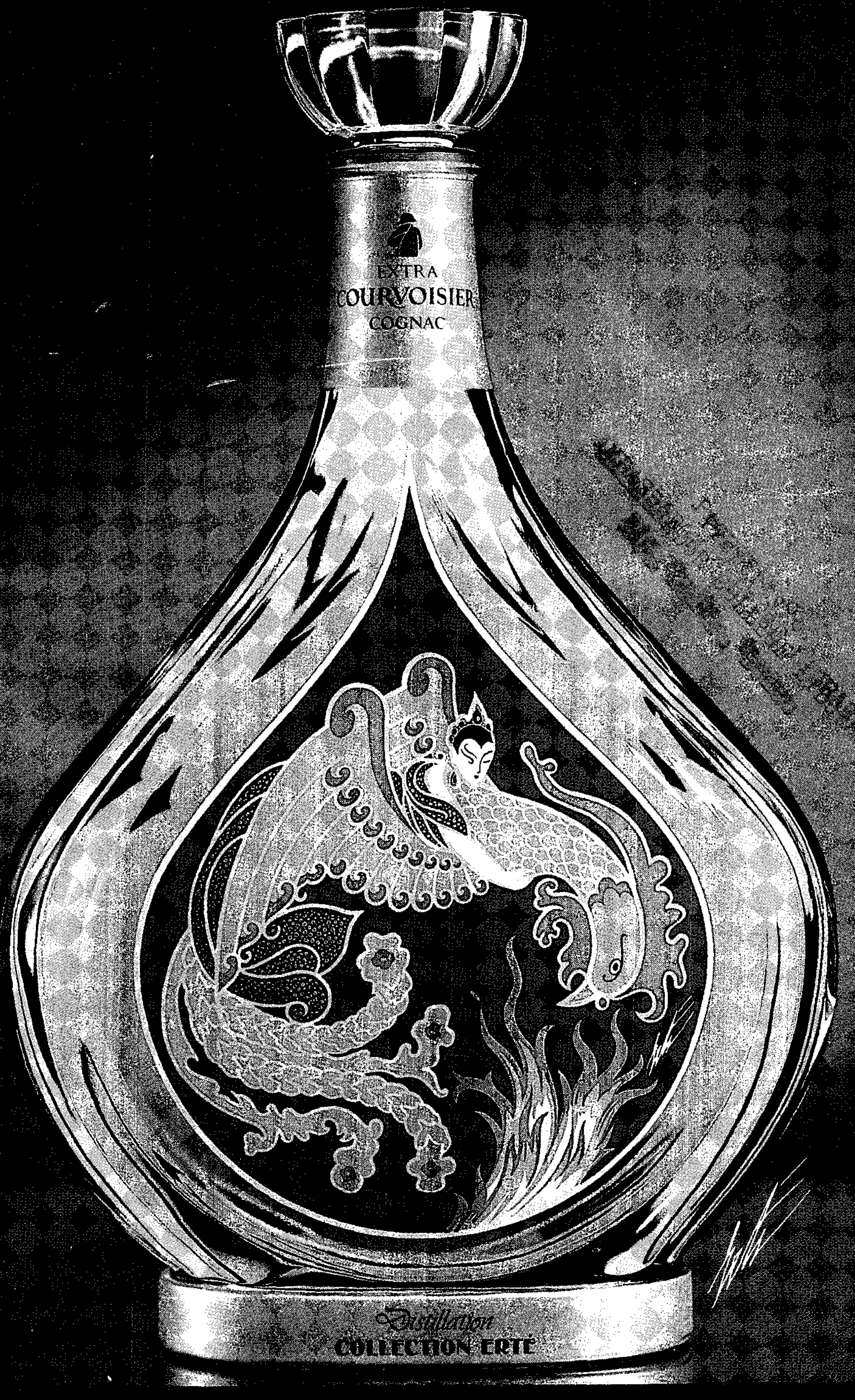
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